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Exploring Career Success with the New Paradigm of
Career Crafting

A thesis
submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the Degree of

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at
Lincoln University
by
Mohini Vidwans

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by

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With the key objective of testing the new paradigm of career crafting, this study examined the main questions about career decisions – how do people choose careers, what motivates and guides their decision-making with regard to exploration, growth and change, and how do they define career success? These are important issues given the rapid pace of the far-reaching changes that have taken place over the past few decades, resulting in a paradigm shift in the personal and work spheres. A qualitative research approach was adopted utilising semi-structured in-depth interviews with 36 accounting professionals in New Zealand – 15 from accounting academia and 21 from large accounting firms.

Built on the job crafting model (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001), this study has created the new paradigm of career crafting by enhancing the principles of cognitive, task and relational crafting. While capturing the agentic spirit of individuals in developing their careers, it is acknowledged that an individual’s choices do not completely reside within the person. The external factors play a vital role in the shaping of career pathways, either by offering support and facilitating growth, or by creating and imposing constraints. However, the central principle of career crafting is that individuals create new opportunities or utilise the opportunities provided by the positive changes or mitigate the negative impact of the adverse situation through invention/adaptation strategy.

A figure depicting a crafting triad represents the close association between the three crafting practices – cognitive, task and relational crafting. These factors are interlinked and interdependent; they have to act together cohesively in order to attain the desired effect of career crafting. It was identified that career crafting played an important role in achieving personal success which is determined by satisfaction in personal and professional spheres. It was also recognised that the desired outcomes varied for different individuals. Finally, career crafting paradigm confirmed the association between crafting skills, external factors and personal success.
Gender and the redefinition of gender-based roles added new dimensions to the analysis of these career decisions. Investigation of career orientation revealed distinct gender differences. It was noted that women had an adaptive focus on career whereas men could focus on their careers to a greater extent confirming the traditional career patterns. This study comments on the other side of the glass ceiling, wherein it is observed that women chart their career pathways mainly through the perception of their roles and the behaviours that comprise them. Married women were able to focus on careers when they garnered support from their spouse and organization though their crafting practices.

While this study focussed on the accounting profession, it is believed that the awareness of career crafting practices would benefit individuals in charting their career pathways. This information could also be embedded in the process of building better work designs where organisations could consider these issues while planning human resource policies for mutual benefits. The eventual outcome of career crafting is that individuals can develop their possible selves and build capabilities to achieve personal success.

**Keywords:** Career crafting, personal success, agentic capabilities, development of possible selves, task, cognitive, relationships, gender, family, organisation, environment, career crafting triad, paradigm shift, career development
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Chapter 1
Exploring Career Pathways to Examine the Concept of Career Crafting

1.1. Introduction

Over the past several decades a number of trends have occurred in theory and research on career development. One of the prominent trends has been examination of the cognitive processes that govern career behaviour. Extant research recognizes that people are active agents in or shapers of their career development, with their behaviour susceptible to change efforts (Bandura, 2006; Hall, 2004; Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 2002). This has resulted in new ways of thinking about careers that are qualitatively different from the concepts that had prevailed through much of the 20th century. The very notion of “career” is evolving as the knowledge economy and technological advancement are changing the way people work and think about their life.

It has been observed that the choices people make during formative periods of their career shape the course of their lives (Bandura, 1997). In the 21st century, people seem to have far more freedom, with regard to fashioning their work lives, than has been typical in the past (Gottfredson, 2002). However, in spite of a considerable body of research on career planning and development, it has been noted that the course of development goes off-course (Brown, 2002).

Researchers have commented that new ideas are needed for thinking about redesigning of jobs and careers and on how to make them more productive, more fulfilling, and more learning-stimulating. Hildebrandt and Littig (2006) proposed that we need an approach that addresses essential problems of everyday life and satisfies the large variety of needs and desires in a very well-targeted, personal and easily comprehensible manner. It is recognised that in the 21st century, there is a need for a coordinated approach to career development, as the dynamic interaction between individuals’ jobs and lives has resulted in the necessity for individuals to be proactive life/career managers (McMahon, Patton, & Tatham, 2003). Now is thus an opportune moment to design fundamentally new ways of working, to generate the best return from all resources (Hall & Heras, 2010), and to provide guidance on how to pursue a more satisfying work-life balance.

This thesis addresses this concern. It recognizes that meanings and identities change over time, as individuals, organisations and researchers change their understanding of career construct. It looks at the notion of a career holistically, with a focus on achieving personal success, and the consequent planning of lives and careers accordingly. It follows the view of Jarvis (2003) that the key to finding
satisfaction in life is not just finding the right job; it is also about becoming the right worker, friend and life partner.

This research proposes a new approach of “career crafting” for explaining career progression and guiding individuals to chart their career pathways to achieve desired outcomes. In order to establish the scope of this project, this chapter firstly discusses the research on the foundation of career crafting – job crafting, then explains the concept behind the new paradigm of career crafting. It next presents the research objectives, outlines the research questions and concludes by a brief description of the structure of the thesis.

1.2. Germination of the study

During the course of a Faculty Development Programme in India in 2011, the researcher selected an article by Brickson (2011) on job crafting for a qualitative research study that has primarily led to the current research. Drawing upon a personal tale, Brickson identified job crafting as an empowering concept to increase the level of satisfaction for her profession, and life. The researcher referred to the root article on job crafting (discussed below), and employed the main concept of job crafting by expanding it to study and plan her own career progression. It was indeed experienced as a tool for understanding and enriching personal and professional aspects of life. The researcher also realised that the concept of career success is subjective, and the desired outcomes depend on the individual’s conceptualisation and evaluation of life goals. Recognising that job crafting principles have the potential for extension to careers, this study was undertaken to explore the new paradigm of career crafting as discussed in the following sections.

1.2.1 Original conceptualisation: job crafting

Job crafting, the foundation of this research study, focused on the proactive role played by individuals in making their jobs more meaningful. In their seminal work, Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001, p. 180) described job crafting as, “a creative and improvised process that captures how individuals locally adopt their jobs in ways that create and sustain a viable definition of the work they do and who they are at work.” The core premise of job crafting theory is that individuals have latitude to re-define and differently enact their jobs; as the boundaries, the meaning of work, and work identities are not likely to be fully determined by formal job requirements. Acting as “job crafters”, individuals thereby create different jobs for themselves, within the context of defined jobs to make it more meaningful.

It is argued that job crafters are all around us; however, individual motivations, opportunities and orientations help to determine the form of job crafting, and the likely individual and organisational effects of it. The extent of job crafting depends upon the sense of freedom or discretion employees
have in what they do in their job and how they do it. It also depends on task interdependence and
closeness of monitoring by management. It may take many forms and directions. The resulting job
alterations can be incremental or radical, visible or invisible.

Job crafting practices are elaborated as the physical and cognitive changes an individual makes in the
task and/or relational boundaries of their work. These are described as taking three main forms (see
Appendix A):

1. Changing the job’s task boundaries – involves altering the number, scope or type of job
tasks done at work;
2. Changing the cognitive task boundaries of the jobs – involves employees’ altering the
view of job as a set of discrete work tasks or as an integrated whole; and
3. Changing the relational boundaries of the job – involves changing the quality, amount or
nature of interaction with others at work.

Two notable reviews of work design theories (Grant & Parker, 2009; Oldham & Hackman, 2010)
acknowledged job crafting as a promising approach to the study of organisational behaviour. A
number of research studies have been undertaken utilising the concept of job crafting, confirming
the academic interest in this topic. They have further explored this main notion of making alterations
to the job to make it more meaningful through different job crafting practices as explained below.

1.2.2 Research studies on job crafting

These empirical studies have primarily focussed on the practice of job crafting, and have investigated
its application and impact on different aspects of employment. It has been recognised that
employees’ cognitive ability, quality of self-image, perceived level of control, and readiness to change
can help predict the extent to which they engage in job crafting (Lyons, 2008). Employees would be
more likely to engage in job crafting when they are performing well, and are perceived by themselves
and others as competent and trustworthy (Clegg & Spencer, 2007). The reverse also appears true in
that employees with a proactive personality have been found most likely to craft their own jobs, and
as a result they are more engaged with their work and perform well (Bakker, Tims, & Derks, 2012).

Contrary to the perception of freedom at higher levels of responsibility, it has been documented that
these employees are likely to feel more constrained when attempting to practise job crafting, despite
being in positions of greater formal autonomy and power (Berg, Wrzesniewski, & Dutton, 2010).
Instead, lower level employees have been found to reengineer the jobs at their level in order to
create more meaningful work (Berg, Dutton, & Wrzesniewski, 2013). In a study of an early educators
group by Leana, Appelbaum and Shevchuk (2009), the idea of individual job crafting was extended to
“collaborative job crafting” with positive performance outcomes.
Job crafting has been associated with increased levels of resilience in the face of adversity at work (Ghitulescu, 2007). In addition, increased emotional well-being and enhanced motivation have been identified as outcomes of job crafting (French, 2010; Tims & Bakker, 2010). Berg, Grant and Johnson (2010) proposed that individuals pursue unanswered callings by crafting their jobs and leisure activities, which leads to pleasant psychological states. It has been found to contribute to the amount or degrees of significance employees believe their work possesses (Rosso, Dekas, & Wrzesniewski, 2010). Wellman and Spretizer (2011) proposed ways that scholars could engage in job crafting for more meaningful work in academia – cognitive crafting by enlarging one’s perspective and leveraging one’s best self; task crafting by engaging challenges in research and teaching; and relational crafting by fostering high quality connections and increasing contact with beneficiaries of their work.

Another study confirmed a link between an active job environment and job crafting, especially when day-to-day challenges are positively associated with day-level work engagement (Petrou, Demerouti, Peeters, Schaufeli, & Hetland, 2012). Further, a scale was developed to measure job crafting behaviour with four dimensions — social job resources, structural job resources, challenging job demands, and hindering job demands (Tims, Bakker, & Derks, 2012).

The salient features of job crafting research identified in the above studies can be summed up as follows:

- Individual factors – cognitive ability, proactive personality, competence, trustworthiness, self-image, and readiness-to-change;
- Organisational factors – freedom and autonomy, level of authority, job environment, managing job resources and demands, task interdependence, and management control;
- Social factors – collaborative crafting, importance of other’s perception; and
- Benefits of job crafting – resilience, enhanced motivation and emotional well-being, ability to face challenges, empowerment, better performance, and meaningful work.

1.3. From job crafting to career crafting

The preceding discussion documents that the job crafting research has examined the concept in a variety of situations, and found it to be a useful construct for making a job more meaningful. However, it has mainly focussed on the individual efforts to alter “jobs” and what happens at the workplace, focusing on the short term; but not taking into account the other important dimensions, that of personal and professional life in the long term. Identifying these gaps in the research and recognising that job crafting principles have the potential for extension to careers, this study therefore addresses five main issues:
1. Separation of work and life

Job crafting research has mainly focussed on what happens at the workplace, and thus does not consider the other important aspect of personal life. But several researchers have emphasised that what work means to people cannot be disentangled from what their life means to them; life, it is argued, is a gestalt (Brief & Nord, 1990). Professional and personal changes often parallel each other (Freeman, 1990), and people do not segment their life into “work” and “personal” categories, but rather their different roles often morph and collide (Pocock, 2003).

This research considers the overarching connections between personal and professional life. It aims to move beyond the linear process of choosing a vocation to a more holistic view of the world, seeing work in relation to other life roles (Hansen, 2001). The main reason for this emphasis is that work and personal life, though different, are interconnected. Therefore, integrating these two aspects this research looks at career not just from the work perspective, but rather as an overlap of various work-life roles.

2. Focus on jobs

Job crafting focussed on jobs, with a short term orientation of how employees make changes to their current jobs. In contrast, career crafting proposes a long term, whole life encompassing approach where it looks at the holistic development of careers, not jobs alone. The terms, “job” and “career” are different; one major difference being the time frame. Job refers to immediate experience, while career represents cumulative work experiences over the entire life span (Hall, 1976; Hall & Heras, 2010; Duarte, 2009).

In other words, a job is simply what employees do presently in an organisation; whereas careers are viewed as a series of jobs, a sort of upward staircase from job to job. When the researcher applied the principles of job crafting to her own career, she realised that crafting is a long term and cumulative process covering decisions from first job to the most recent, therefore it was decided to expand the focus to include the whole career pathway.

3. Focus on individual agency

Job crafting is presented as an individual-level activity wherein employees are presumed to be proactive architects of their jobs. Being proactive is about taking control to make things happen, rather than watching things happen (Parker, Bindl, & Strauss, 2010). It involves aspiring and striving to bring about change in the environment and/or oneself to achieve a different future (Bindl & Parker, 2010; Grant & Ashford, 2008). The concept of career crafting is also based on the premise
that careers can be made more meaningful through conscious and proactive alterations, within the boundaries of the career.

In this regard, individual or personal agency is an important term as it is a central concept of this research study. It is pertinent to quote Sen (1999, p. 19), who defined agent as “Someone who acts and brings about change, and whose achievements can be judged in terms of her own values and objectives.” Dalziel and Saunders (2014) expounded that personal agency is a sociological term conveying the idea that people should not be regarded as passive recipients of their social environment; instead people are capable of active engagement in shaping their futures through choices they make.

This research agrees with this individual focus, and it is built on the belief that people are contributors of their life circumstances, not just products of them. However, it is also acknowledged that career decisions cannot happen at an individual level, as individual behaviour is embedded in the social and organisational environment. Sen (1999) further asserted that individual agency is constrained by social, political and economic opportunities that are available to us. Likewise, Bandura (2001) claimed that people do not live their lives in isolation; many of the things they seek are likely to be achievable through socially influenced effort be it with family, friends or colleagues. Therefore, this research aims to capture this agentic individual spirit along with the external influences that surround it.

4. Implications of gender

Gender and work has been extensively researched and it has been noted that gender differences at work exist. At the time of this project, the researcher did not come across any job crafting studies that explored the implications of gender with regard to crafting between jobs and within a job category.

When studying careers one cannot overlook one of the most dramatic demographic and social changes of the 20th century, as noted by Wax (2004) – the surge of women into the workforce. Although there are early roots of women in the paid work, they slowly began increasing their numbers in professional and managerial jobs in the later part of the last century. With regard to career patterns, it has been observed that the broad categories for women have remained the same – housewives, balancing home and work, and careerists. What has changed significantly is the relative percentage of women who predominantly display each pattern, with more women focusing on careers (Hakim, 2000; Osipow & Fitzgerald, 1996). Therefore, this aspect needs to be explored further to examine the relationship between career crafting practices and career outcomes.
Initially, the study had planned to focus on women, but it was felt that as a career development model, career crafting had the potential to go beyond the demographic boundaries (such as gender), and that its scope would have been constrained if it focused on women alone. Any theoretical model that addresses how women might manage their careers should be equally applicable to men if it is a truly explanatory mechanism. Furthermore, this will also facilitate a comparison between the two groups. The main issue is how some people (men and women both) seem to achieve better outcomes than others, the factors that drive those decisions and the exploration of whether career crafting plays a pivotal role in this process and their satisfaction.

5. Desired outcomes

Job crafting is a way that individuals express and use often-hidden degrees of freedom in their jobs to customise it to fit their own sense of what the job should be. Consequently, it leads to more positive and meaningful experience for the job crafters. Similarly, when the researcher employed the concept of job crafting to study her career success, she realised that it was not measured by objective success of position, salary etc., but by how she defined and judged success in the personal and professional sphere.

Therefore, career crafting is proposed as a framework that captures desired outcomes as what individuals consider significant for themselves, and one of the main constructs of this research is personal success – the individual’s perception of her/his achievements. Though individuals are strongly influenced by social and cultural forces, it is believed that they ultimately decide for themselves what is meaningful for them. Therefore, in this research career success is operationalized by the individual’s subjective judgements about their personal and professional achievements, and the association between career crafting and personal success is examined.

Thus, this research extends the concept of job crafting to become a broader construct of “career crafting”, which necessarily incorporates the integration of career into the greater context of one’s life. Such an augmentation would yield a tool capable of empowering and enabling individuals to better achieve their desired outcomes. Since the conceptual definition of job crafting is well specified, it can readily be embedded in a theoretical model of career crafting in which “crafting” plays a dominant role. Primarily, the previously identified main forms of job crafting – cognitive, task and relational – are included in the approach, along with the various external influencing factors that will be identified in the literature review in the next chapter. The career crafting approach will be detailed at the end of Chapter 2, after having established the theoretical foundation for the project.
1.3.1 Status of the term “crafting” in the career literature

Crafting is not entirely a new term in the field of careers; references can be found in the literature where it has been used to explain the developmental aspect of careers. However, it has not been utilised in the same manner as used in this thesis, specifically related to job crafting.

An early reference is by Cochran (1990), where the term crafting was used to explain a career as the course of a person’s life. Cochran referred to four forms of explanation inherited from Aristotle, which were originally extracted from a story of a human crafting a product. Four types were identified: final (what was the purpose), material (what is used in making it), efficient (who or what made it), and formal (what was the vision or design). This research is primarily interested in these aspects of crafting as they appear to be more instrumental in the design of a career pathway.

Jones (1996) identified crafting as one of the four stages which were used to describe career journey of creative professionals in the U.S. film industry: (1) beginning a career; (2) crafting the career; (3) navigating the career; and (4) maintaining the career. Crafting according to Jones, entailed learning technical skills and being socialized into the film industry by internalizing the industry culture in order to perform the tasks successfully.

Kielhofner et al. (2002) referred to crafting occupational life, by which they indicated the way in which we synthesize the many elements of the self and the world into a comprehensible whole. They argue that, these elements are always in the background, influencing how we modify our ongoing occupational lives in the stream of time.

Seligman (2002) recommended re-crafting work to use one’s greatest individual strengths to achieve organisational goals. Seligman emphasised that such modification would allow one to experience each of the three elements of overall happiness: pleasure, engagement and meaning.

Ibarra (2003) referred to crafting experiments as a practice of implementing small probes and projects that allow the trying out of new professional roles on a limited scale without committing to a particular direction. Ibarra called this a “committed flirtation” with our many selves.

In a study of older persons’ occupational identity, crafting involved changing self-awareness, relevance of relational practices, enduring qualities, and reflective processes in the formation of a sense of self (Howie, Coulter, & Feldman, 2004).

Inkson (2004) used craft as a metaphor to emphasise the role of the individual in creating his or her own career. According to Inkson, it enables the individual to solve life problems in a practical way and to implement his or her personal sense of self. This metaphor includes theories of career which
emphasize the role of the individual in creating his or her own career and the psychological and behavioural processes involved.

The closest to the present study’s proposed construct of career crafting is Valcour (2013), who has elaborated on crafting a career. Valcour suggested that the keys to crafting a sustainable career are knowing yourself and being acutely attuned to the field and companies in which you are interested. It involves performing meaningful work that makes full use of your skills, working with people who energize you, and being able to fit work together with the other important things like family, friends and leisure.

The “craft” metaphor also raises the issue of career planning to a different level, where along with being a rational process involving information gathering and goal setting, it may also involve intuition, incremental choices, and action driven by internal processes (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997). Thus, it also suggests there might be an artistic component, in the sense of a skilled and creative person applying these talents to fashioning and expressing themselves.

Here, the term “career crafting” has been coined primarily because it is an adaptation of the job crafting approach with an emphasis on careers. Beyond this adaptation, the term is thought to be appropriate because career development has a number of craft-like characteristics. It recognizes that deliberate, calculated, yet intuitive efforts (associated with “crafting”) are involved in career decisions. It also includes a focus on the way it balances the considerations of functionality and creativity (Poehnell, Amundson, Peiperl, Arthur, & Anand, 2002). It is recognized as an ongoing process of construction involving constantly looking inside oneself, outside oneself and ahead in time (Inkson, 2004). The basic concepts of career crafting, which are design, agency, development of selves, collaboration, happiness, and holistic life, resonate with above approaches in some ways.

1.4. Research objectives

Based on the prior discussion, the research objectives were specified:

- To expand the concept of job crafting to “career crafting”;
- To test the extended concept by using career crafting framework to understand how individuals use it in their career progression;
- To investigate the effect of gender on the various aspects of career development and career crafting; and
- To gain insights on the impact of “career crafting” on personal success.

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1 This is incidentally after the research started in 2012.
This thesis takes a case study methodology approach to test the power of the new paradigm of career crafting. The chosen case study is the accounting profession in New Zealand focusing on accounting academics working in universities and accounting practitioners working in firms. This is chosen because of the following two factors.

1. New Zealand, gender, and accounting

To trace back the history, it is well-known that in 1893 New Zealand (NZ) was the first nation where women won the vote (Ellis & McCabe, 2003). It is perhaps lesser known, but important from the point of view of the accounting sector, that in 1902 it was the first country in the commonwealth to have a professional woman accountant (Emery, Hooks, & Stewart, 2002). In studies conducted at the global level, New Zealand is ranked consistently at a high level for achieving gender equality (Global diversity rankings, 2012; Grant Thornton Report, 2012; IBR Report, 2012; OECD Better Life Index, 2012; The global gender gap report, 2012).

With regard to the two participant groups, New Zealand women outnumber men (65%) for participation at the tertiary education level (Tertiary Education, 2012), but this ratio diminishes in the pyramidal structure of hierarchy with women being 24.38 per cent of university professors and associate professors (New Zealand Census of Women’s Participation, 2012). Similarly, with regard to accounting practitioners, the New Zealand Institute of Chartered Accountants has 42 per cent female membership (NZICA, 2013), however, the New Zealand branches of the ‘Big Four’ accounting firms (Deloitte, KPMG, Ernst & Young, and PwC), have an overall average of 15 per cent female partners (New Zealand Census of Women's Participation, 2012). These gendered patterns compel this researcher to explore this phenomenon further.

2. Accounting profession is seen as a well-structured, mono-cultural career pathway

By confining the study to the accounting profession, it was felt that individuals would likely face similar requirements, opportunities and challenges. Moreover, the concept of a “profession” acknowledges the formal learning process that facilitate the acquisition and application of well-defined technical knowledge. It is recognized that the process of adopting the values, norms and behaviours of a profession is fundamental to the career success of the person (Anderson-Gough, Grey, & Robson, 2001). The accounting career routes are prescribed by the professional body NZICA for accounting practitioners, and academic routes by universities. Thus, these are the standardised pathways for accounting professionals, planning to enter accounting firms or academia (described in

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2At the time of data collection New Zealand Institute for Chartered Accountants was the professional accounting body, it later incorporated with its Australian counterpart in November 2013, and now it is known as Chartered Accountants Australia and New Zealand.
section 4.1.1). Therefore, it was decided to focus on the accounting profession as it seemed to exhibit a well-structured career pathway.

1.5. Research questions

Based on the research objectives and the above discussion, the following research questions were formulated to examine this proposed phenomenon:

1. How do individuals, in this case, accounting professionals, pave career pathways?
2. How are initial career goals connected to career position and future career goals?
3. What is the role of the individual and the external factors in framing the career pathways, and in the choices they make?
4. How is gender related to career development and career crafting?
5. How do the main elements of career crafting – task, relational and cognitive – lead to effective crafting?
6. What is the association between career crafting and personal success?

These questions will be explored in the light of the literature presented in the next chapter, where the theoretical foundation for the project will be established. In later chapters, these questions will be linked with the subsequent analysis in order to operationalise the concept of career crafting.

As noted earlier, gender seems to have a strong bearing on the career development process. While researching the history of accounting professionals’ career journeys, the researcher came across the story of one of the first women accountants in Scotland, Helen Lowe, which is presented in summary form below. It is an interesting and intriguing story from the point of view of career development, where through determined effort a woman was able to succeed in a profession that was dominated by males, in an era where women were not expected to contribute to the professions.

1.6. The story of Helen Lowe (1897-1997)

The life journey of Helen Lowe was narrated by Jeacle (2011), in which the individual experience of Lowe is illustrated within the broader sweeping history of the early 20th century gender struggle in the accounting profession. At the age of 16, Lowe left Edinburgh to make a life of her own in London, and worked as a clerk in the Post Office. Probably similar to countless other female clerks of the era, she was encouraged to leave her job in 1919, and make way for the veterans of the Great War. By then, the work experience as a clerk had exposed her to the idea of pursuing an accounting career, and she decided to become a professional accountant.

Lowe became one of the first women Chartered Accountants in Scotland in 1919 and subsequently joined an accounting firm. But after nine years, she left the firm as a new partner (male) was
promoted ahead of her, despite her double qualifications and long practice with the firm. Lowe decided to set up her own accountancy practice as a single woman, and equipped herself to succeed in a male dominated field of accounting. She successfully ran her practice for 70 years, and was highly regarded as an accountant and as an achiever in a man’s world. The initial capital investment of £54 in 1928 ultimately yielded an almost £7million estate by 1997.

Lowe’s career journey is exemplary for this research as it is set in the accounting sector and demonstrates success of the first professional woman accountant under challenging circumstances. The researcher felt that there were many parts of Lowe’s career journey that could exemplify the career crafting approach. Her career trajectory will be revisited in the last chapter on conclusion (section 6.4), where the identified linkages will be presented as a case study to validate the concept of career crafting.

1.7. The structure of the thesis

The thesis consists of six chapters, the chapters are outlined in Figure 1.1. After this introduction, Chapter 2 establishes the theoretical foundation through the review of prior research and literature. In particular, it elaborates on the research related to career development, influence of individual and external factors on career pathways, and gendered career patterns. It also discusses the concept of personal success in detail, and then presents the career crafting approach by linking these constructs together.

Chapter 3 elaborates on the research approach and why qualitative study is thought to be the most appropriate for the enquiry. It describes in detail the method used for data collection and analysis, and how qualitative software NVivo was used to categorize the interview information in the thematic framework to test the new paradigm of career crafting.

Chapter 4 presents the findings by analysing career pathways with respect to interpretation of the participants’ accounts, and links these to the theoretical background of career development. These pathways are further investigated to understand the decision-making process. Career lattice is presented as a backdrop of the study, and career orientation of the participants with a special focus on gender is discussed. The formulation of career goals is elaborated covering initial goal, present pathway and future plans. Based on the narratives of the participants the influence of the external factors on career decisions is expounded, describing in detail the role of family, organisation and environment in career decisions and outcomes.

Chapter 5 focusses on career crafting practices of the participants – the ways in which the participants have responded to the changes and challenges in their personal and professional life, and charted their respective career pathways. Certain inductive and deductive themes emerged from
the exploration, which are linked to the concept of career crafting to understand the presence and practice of it in career planning. The chapter explores the career progression of the participants and links their behaviour with regard to the approach of career crafting extracting their cognitive, relational and task practices. On the basis of the discussion it presents career crafting triad which delineates the association between these three aspects. It next examines the relationship between career crafting and personal success, and concludes by presenting the career crafting paradigm that elucidates the role of crafting through four categories of cases. This in turn leads to the confirmation of the understanding and further formulation of the career crafting approach, and is expected to be the theoretical contribution as a consequence of the project.

Chapter 6 summarises the foregoing discussion and analysis, and presents conclusions with regard to career crafting as a holistic career development approach. It also presents the characteristics of participants as “crafters”, demonstrated through the crafting incidents identified in their narratives. These would facilitate an understanding that will lead to synthesizing the “crafting” practices and outcomes. This research appears to be a first of its kind of study to examine the concept of career crafting, as an extension of job crafting. Hence, there is a wide scope for future studies which can focus on different professions, vocations and avocations. This also gives rise to the implications and limitations of the research, which are discussed in the latter half of Chapter 6.
Chapter 1 Introduction

Chapter 2 Building Theoretical Framework
• Different perspectives of career development
• Forming career pathways
• Gender and career
• Career progression and personal success
• Linking career crafting to related constructs

Chapter 3 Testing the New Paradigm
• Why qualitative approach
• Research plan
• Data collection
• Qualitative data analysis

Chapter 4 Analysing Career Pathways
• Formation of career pathways
• Career lattice
• Formulation of career goals
• Career focus
• Major external factors influencing career pathways

Chapter 5 Towards an Extended Paradigm of Career Crafting
• Career crafting: cognitive, relational and task crafting
• Career crafting triad
• Career crafting and career clarity
• Career crafting and personal success
• Career crafting paradigm

Chapter 6 Career Crafting Paradigm
• Conclusion to research questions
• Contribution to the field
• Case study of Helen Lowe
• Limitations of the study
• Directions for further research

Figure 1-1 Outline of the thesis
1.8. Conclusion

This introductory chapter has positioned this thesis about exploring the new concept of career crafting in the context of accounting professionals in New Zealand. The focus is on their career pathways to understand whether career crafting is practised in career development, and its impact on career progression and personal success. It also aims at suggesting a more relevant and robust theoretical framework for investigating how personal and professional aspects of lives evolve. A key outcome expected of this research, is clearer insights into the decision-making process of these professionals in terms of their career trajectories, and the relationship of these to their lives. This could have usefulness both to individuals and organisations in better understanding the parameters of career management and work-life balance.

It has been observed that there are distinct differences between career patterns of men and women. While focusing on gender, this research looks at careers from the view of the participants, to understand their story. It aims to discover the patterns from the data and then attribute them which will lead to a clearer understanding of the career crafting approach.

In order to establish the concept of career crafting, the following Chapter (2) presents an extensive review of the prior research and literature with regard to the research objectives and questions. Since this research has widened the focus by including careers, there will be other possible elements that will likely enhance the idea of career crafting. Therefore, the proposed approach will be delineated at the end of the next chapter (2) after exploring the career literature.
Chapter 2 Building the Theoretical Framework

2.1. Introduction

Research on career development maps a wide terrain across various disciplines. The study of careers is thus an interdisciplinary subject comprising research from multiple areas. These include psychology, sociology, social psychology, anthropology, epidemiology, economics, organisational behaviour, positive organisational psychology, and human resource management. Accordingly, career formation and its implications have been viewed by researchers from many different perspectives.

Generally people think of careers in terms of work choices, but this research adopts a holistic view – understanding careers as having a more meaningful, long term, encompassing work and personal life approach. This chapter sets the theoretical foundation for the current project by presenting an overview of careers – their formation, the factors that are likely to influence career pathways, and the nuances of gender and career are elaborated. It next discusses the paradigm shift in the view of career progression and presents the construct of personal success. It finishes by linking the major constructs together in order to identify the salient characteristics that express the career crafting idea.

2.2. Different perspectives of career development

Career development can be interpreted from a number of different perspectives, all of which contribute to the understanding of the phenomenon. A full review of career development from its roots in the early 20th century to the present day is beyond the scope of this study, as that literature is prohibitively voluminous; a brief overview is presented below. Many of these early studies recognize gender superficially; implications of gender on career being an important part of this study, it is discussed in detail in section 2.4.

In the early 1900s, career development was viewed as an objective process whereby individuals could be matched to jobs (McMahon & Tatham, 2008), as a result career was largely determined by the work that people did over time, and was aligned only with paid employment. Though it has long been realised that for many people work is more than a means to the end of earning a living.

Foundational research by Morse and Weiss (1955) documented that apart from earning money, “working” gives a feeling of being tied to a larger society, of having something meaningful to do, and of having a purpose in life. It has been well-established that occupations structure a large part of people’s everyday reality and provide them with a major source of personal identity and sense of self-worth (Bandura, 1997). Thus, work, and consequently, career, is a key form of human existence.
for more than its pragmatic value; it also is for status, fulfilment and meaning (O’Toole & Lawler, 2007).

The career development framework that was presented by Parsons (1909, as cited in Brown, 2002, p. 3) over a century ago, but which still applies to career development, discusses the influence of three broad factors and how they are important for understanding the wise choice of vocation:

1. A clear understanding of yourself, your aptitudes, abilities, interest, ambitions, resources, limitations, and knowledge of their causes;
2. A knowledge of the requirements, conditions of success, advantages and disadvantages, compensation, opportunities, and prospects in different lines of work; and
3. True reasoning on the relations of these two groups of facts.

The above three factor framework has been reflected in many subsequent research studies. For example, Peterson, Sampson, Lenz, and Reardon (2002) presented them as the cognitive information processing (CIP) approach with three domains: self-knowledge, occupational knowledge and career decision making.

Hughes (1937) looked at careers from a moving perspective, as it is not absolutely fixed either as to points of view, direction, or destination. Hughes explained how in the course of a career the person finds a place within the organisation with reference to other people, and interprets the meaning of the one life he or she has to live. This research has adopted this approach and proposes to go beyond the work sphere and describes a career as a way of life.

Super (1953) thought that the process of vocational development was essentially that of developing and implementing a self-concept. It was construed as a compromise process between individual and social factors, between self-concept and reality. Super (1957) further envisaged the structure of a career pattern as the combination and sequence of roles played by a person during the course of a lifetime. Later, developing the model of a “Career-Life Rainbow”, Super (1980) pointed out that decision points occur before and at the time of taking on a new role, of giving up an old role, and of making significant changes in the nature of an existing role. These roles evolve over time; one may be playing several of these roles simultaneously with varying degrees of commitment.

Hall (1976) proposed a new concept of protean career, meaning able to change frequently or easily. He envisaged it as the one driven by the person, not the organisation, and that will be reinvented by the person from time to time. Hall (1996) later declared that the career of the 21st century will be protean.
Schein (1996) discovered in a longitudinal study (from data collected in 1975, 1978, 1987, and 1990) that careers evolve as one gains occupational and life experience. Thus, it is a long term process in which individuals develop through unfolding stages of personal and occupational maturity (Herriot, 1984). This is facilitated through the combined influence of job experience, personal life factors and societal opportunity, which has been found to have impact on ways of thinking about and approaching work. For example, in their “career lattice” model Christensen, McDonnell and Price (1988) presented a matrix of responsibilities and role options, and the possibilities of growing laterally thereby providing additional options for professional development.

Arthur, Claman and DeFillippi (1995) proposed that the emerging new patterns of career need to align with the new paradigm of intelligent enterprise where the focus is on development and deployment of intellectual resources. They suggested that individuals also need to develop competencies – knowing why, whom and how – which they labelled “intelligent careers”. This can be expressed as the reason, one is pursuing a particular career, deciding whom to initiate contact and relationships with, and determining how to perform the tasks and roles. Further, to this concept of “intelligent careers”, three more dimensions were added by Inkson and Arthur (2001) – knowing what, where and when, with regard to a career; that is, knowing what career, where to gain entrance and training, and when to stay or leave.

Patton and McMahan (2014) emphasise that although traditionally career has been conceptualised as a linear, vertical advancement of jobs, we need to adopt an open systems approach which encompasses the individual and the environment, interaction and change. They further expound that multiplicity in meaning has shifted the focus from an objective self with measurable interest, abilities and values to one that is socially constructed with relationships and contexts.

Several theories describe how the individual and career are both dynamic, recognising that in developed societies, people have more than a single job over a lifetime. The boundaryless career idea characterized a range of possible forms of work that defy traditional employment assumptions (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; DeFillippi & Arthur, 1996; Sullivan & Arthur, 2006). This approach emphasised that there can be mobility across occupational or cultural boundaries, measured along physical and psychological continua and focused on independence from traditional organisations.

Another approach by Baruch (2004), which he called the “multi-directional career model”, proposed that navigating one’s own career is done by creating new paths and selecting different directions one wishes to pursue. The kaleidoscope career model (KCM) proposed by Mainiero and Sullivan (2006) described how careers were created by individuals as they made decisions based on the shifting importance of challenge, balance and authenticity across their lifetime.
Another way to conceptualise a career from the individual’s perspective is to consider it as a long term work history which represents the dynamic interplay between the three activities: work, relationships and self-development (Derr, 1986; Sears, 1982). It is a life theme pattern that emerges from imposing personal meaning on past memories, present experiences and future aspirations (Savickas et al., 2009). This study has mainly adopted this approach, and resonates with a Canadian definition provided by National Steering Committee for Career Development Guidelines and Standards (2004, as cited in McMahon & Tatham, 2008, p. 3):

A lifestyle concept that involves sequence of work, learning and leisure activities in which one engages throughout a lifetime. Careers are unique to each person and are dynamic...

Careers include how persons balance their paid and unpaid work and personal life roles.

From the above discussion it can be understood that forming career pathways is a long term process and it is influenced by various factors. With reference to Research Questions 1 and 2, this research is interested in knowing how career pathways are formed and goals are formulated, which is discussed in the following sections.

2.3. Forming career pathways

Researchers have identified four primary terms to examine career decisions that lead to forming of career pathways: career orientation, career identity, career centeredness, and career commitment.

**Career orientation** is the extent to which one feels focused on the career. Career patterns are largely determined by decisions which stem from one’s career orientation. Cochran (1983, p. 3) has described a person with a strong career orientation as the one who has established an unambiguous career direction which is part of a focussed outlook upon one’s future, which is self-relevant, and which is grounded on a positive personal assessment. Relating to women, Marshall and Wijting (1980) described career orientation as an intention to work into the future, desire to work irrespective of financial need, valuing one’s career above other areas of life, choice of traditionally male career fields, and holding positive attitudes towards work.

**Career identity** represents the way individuals define themselves in the career context. As Savickas (1997) suggested, it can be conceptualised as a “cognitive compass”, used to navigate career opportunities, congruent with the individual’s changing strengths and weaknesses, and shifting beliefs, attitudes, and future aspirations. He further linked this adaptability to “planfulness”, a readiness to cope with and a willingness to explore oneself and one’s environment whilst attempting to look into one’s potential career future.
Career centeredness is an outlook that places career above other life activities such as recreation, family life, etc. It is measured by the relative satisfaction expected from one’s career, the relative time one anticipates devoting to career activities and one’s attitude toward the relative importance of work (Marshall & Wijting, 1980).

Career commitment is expressed through the degree to which a person keeps the intention of steadily pursuing a career throughout life, regardless of financial need or competing obligations. Several researchers have observed that it demonstrates one’s dedication to work and career aspirations, and reflects the extent to which work activities figure into actual life plans (Blau, 1988; Colarelli & Bishop, 1990; Marshall & Wijting, 1980; Morrow & Wirth, 1989).

The key to a successful career change is knowing what we want to do next and then using that knowledge to guide our actions. However, as Ibarra (2003) observed, change usually happens the other way around: Doing comes first, knowing second. In part, this research focuses on the process of career decisions, and proposes how one of the main components of career crafting, cognitive crafting, can facilitate the “knowing” aspect so that individuals may achieve better career outcomes.

The primary motivational source for a career development decision is awareness of a gap between a present and a desired state. The detailed construction of a career pathway changes to accord with the circumstances. It is a continual process of recreation as people establish their own selves in relation to the changing situation. It is recognized that the way people organise their roles and identities is a dynamic issue, and that it is a live and continually changing option for people (Marks & MacDermid, 1996). This aspect can be observed with regard to our 36 participants’ different courses of careers, with ups and downs, breaks, and branching off on a new pathway to suit the changed circumstances (see Appendix K).

Super (1980) has elaborated on the “Life-span Life-space” model of career development in which he tied the life stages of – growth, exploration, establishment, maintenance, and decline – with age and related roles individuals play. Further, it has been observed that these cycles consist of alternating periods of stability and transition within a given structure of key choices (Bandura, 1997). In the transitional period, one questions and reassesses the existing structure, to explore various possibilities for change in self and the world (Levinson, 1986). Moreover, certain issues predominate at different points in the life span, one parameter usually takes centre stage, with the remaining parameters active but taking on a secondary role at that time (Sullivan & Mainiero, 2008).

It has been observed that career formation also requires a willingness to explore knowledge of self (interests, values and skills), and the motivation to learn about the world of work, confidence, commitment, and the acceptance of personal responsibility (Peterson et al., 2002). In essence, career
planning requires a vision of another way of living, the confident expectation that it can be done, and
the support of family, friends, or a community (McKenna, 1997). It has been established that an
individual’s career choices do not reside completely within the person. Rather, they are formulated
and/or developed through relationships with others. Thus, people consider the implications of their
actions before they decide to engage in a behaviour, and in forming these intentions “important
others” play an influential role (Ajzen, 2005; Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). Positive relations with others
affect satisfaction (Ryff, 1989), and therefore other people matter mightily in a satisfied life (Dutton
& Heaphy, 2003; Peterson, Park, & Seligman, 2005).

Bakan (1966) presented two fundamental modalities in the existence of living forms; “agency”, for
the existence of an organism as an individual, and “communion”, for the participation of the
individual in some larger organism of which the individual is a part. Bakan argued that these themes
need to be balanced over a lifetime to experience a sense of meaningfulness and well-being.

Thus, beyond individual level factors such as demographics and work history, an individual’s decision
to change careers is socially embedded (Higgins, 2001). This is likely because, humans are assumed to
be active, growth-oriented organisms whose natural developmental tendencies are toward
autonomy – internal integration, and homonymy –\(^3\) social integration (Deci & Ryan, 2000). And as
Bandura (2006) noted, there will be ongoing tensions between the two, as they operate in a broad
network of sociocultural influences.

Several researchers have affirmed that attitudes of family members, co-workers, supervisors, clients,
government, and media all impact and influence the individual’s attitudes and beliefs with respect to
career related decisions (Corso & Rehfuss, 2011; Hackett, 1995/1997; Hackett & Betz, 1981; Peterson
et al., 2005). These various influences on career decisions are interwoven and interdependent, and
are active in the forming of pathways.

Latham and Pinder (2005) suggested that people set goals and strategize ways to attain them based
on their needs, values, and the situational context. Bandura (2003) elaborated that while setting
goals for themselves, people anticipate the likely consequences of prospective actions, and plan
courses of action that are likely to produce desired outcomes and avoid detrimental ones. Thus,
individual choice is circumscribed by compromises between what is desirable and what is feasible
(Bird, 2006). Moreover, as Gregory and Milner (2009) maintained, these career preferences are
constrained by a wide range of factors operating at micro (individual), meso (organisation) and
macro (environment) level. Patton and McMahon (1999, 2014) maintained in their systems approach

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\(^3\) The state or quality of sounding identical, whether identical or not.
to careers that individuals need to be open to changes and developments from within and through constantly interrelating with other systems.

Super’s (1992) model of the “arch of career determinants” pointed to these personal and environmental elements, which influence one’s career and in part determine the career pathway. This interconnectedness means the environment informs the self, which interacts with the environment, which in turn impacts the self. As a result, the interplay between the two allows a person to redefine their identity over time (Corso & Rehfuss, 2011).

Thus, these various influences can be summarised as individual, family, organisation, and environment. The following discussion elaborates the importance of these foundational factors, addressing Research Question 3.

### 2.3.1 Individual

The role of individuals in career formation is of central concern for this research, as one of the principal tenets is to examine the impact of individuals’ career crafting practices on their career progression. The interest in the self as an originating agent is not new. The notion that employees introduce novel ways to change their roles has theoretical roots in perspectives on role innovation (Katz & Kahn, 1978). It has been established that employees may also on occasion redesign their jobs on their own initiative – either with or without management assent or cooperation (Kulik, Oldham, & Hackman, 1987).

Researchers have identified different such behaviours. For example, the concept of Role transition which introduces new behaviours into pre-existing roles (Nicholson, 1984); Task revision functions as a corrective remedy of a faulty job design (Staw & Boettger, 1990); Envisioning aids in achieving future outcomes by changing the self or by changing the situation (Parker, Bindl, & Strauss, 2010); Personal initiative refers to a goal-directed and action-oriented self-starting behaviour with a long term focus (Frese, Fay, Hilburger, Leng, & Tag, 1997); and Taking-charge behaviour is seen as an extra-role discretionary behaviour (Morrison & Phelps, 1999).

It has been established that at the individual level, people enact their roles in ways that allow them to meet their needs and desires, redefine their positions, and advance their careers (Baker & Faulkner, 1991; Collier & Callero, 2005). These perspectives emphasise the role played by employees in altering their jobs. Thus, it has been widely acknowledged that, instead of merely enacting their roles as assigned, employees actively engage in efforts to modify their job behaviours and redefine their roles. Subsequently, the changing nature of work has further challenged traditional models of work performance and led researchers to focus more on employees’ discretionary and extra-role behaviours (Griffin, Neal, & Parker, 2007). Now it is recognized that individuals bear most of the
responsibility for planning and managing their own careers (Grimland, Vigoda-Gadot, & Baruch, 2012).

Theories of career as a process place individuals in the position of understanding where they must manage their own life, thus embedding career within the life cycle (Duarte, 2009). Individuals are considered the makers of their trajectories (McKenna, 1997), and their careers are constructed as they make choices that resonate with their core self (Steiber & Haas, 2009). Many social scientists have adopted a social constructionist paradigm which affirms this perspective. This view emphasises that people actively construct their own reality (Brown, 2002; Savickas, 2011).

The social cognition theory perspective presented by Bandura (2003) viewed people as self-organising, proactive, self-reflecting, and self-regulating, not just as reactive organisms shaped by environmental forces or driven by inner impulses. As Bandura (2001) maintained, through agentic actions people devise ways of adapting to diverse environments, they figure out ways to circumvent constraints, redesign and construct environments to suit their goals. Thus, it is believed that the agentic theoretical perspective on career development, which emerged a few decades ago, arguably better serves as the integrative principle in human self-development, adaptation and change (Bandura, 1997, 2006). This is the basis of career crafting, the agentic approach taken by people in career development, where they are self-organising and proactive, and demonstrate the capacity to make choices and to exercise control over the quality of one’s life.

To demonstrate the above outlook, this research has adopted the continuum by Greenhalgh, Robert, Macfarlane, Bate, and Kyriakidou (2004) initially developed to explain the spread of innovation. It is proposed that career crafters having an agentic perspective can be placed towards the right side of the continuum as it is thought they take charge and create their future:

Let it happen ------------------ Help it happen ---------------- Make it happen

When an individual sees himself or herself learning, growing, and effectively responding to challenges, he/she is likely to feel more competent and efficacious in their work. Feelings of personal control or autonomy and one’s cognitions are meaningful because they reassure individuals that they are agentic actors (Baumeister & Vohs, 2002; Seligman, 2002; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). Additionally, people’s personal and career stage influences their individual motives, needs, and values related to work and career development (Stone, 2007). Further, people often develop assumptions of themselves and of their identity (Latham & Pinder, 2005). It has also been established that people rely on their self-knowledge or identity for career choices, and that the faith in their capabilities, self-concept, appearance, and abilities act as the key determinants in career development (Gottfredson, 2002; Hackett & Betz, 1981; Savickas, 2002; Super, 1980).
Moreover, people are not only agents of action but also self-examiners of their own functioning. They do things that give them self-satisfaction and self-worth, and refrain from behaving in ways that produce self-censure (Bandura, 2003), but people do not come fully equipped with these agentic capabilities.

The focus of this research is on building these capabilities as a basic block of freedom that Sen (1999) commented on, he stated that attention needs to be paid particularly to the expansion of the capabilities of persons to lead the lives they value – and have reason to value. This research proposes that individuals create and refine these through the development of their possible selves as explained below.

**Development of possible selves**

This can be related to one of the major principles of job crafting that believes individuals create different jobs for themselves, thereby integrating themselves into the work. The concept of possible selves was originally presented by Markus and Nurius (1986) in their seminal presentation of the construct. They proposed possible selves as representing the individual’s ideas of what they might become, what they would like to become and what they are afraid of becoming. Possible selves are important, as they may act as incentives and provide an evaluation of the current self. In further research, it was identified that two basic processes – the construction of possible selves and the validation of these selves – lead to personal growth (Wurf & Markus, 1991). Another research study by Ruvolo and Markus (1992), affirmed the important role played by positive representation of possible selves as an important component of effective performance. The participants who imagined being successful and accepted positive possible selves, scored highest in the above study on a task-measuring effort.

Thus, the clearer an individual’s representation of himself or herself in the future that reflects the hopes and aspirations in relation to work, the more accessible the future work self-image and the more salient the future work self (Strauss, Griffin, & Parker; 2012). The power of future work selves has been identified as a motivational resource for proactive career behavioural change. However, individuals need to be able to have conversations with themselves about what future they want to create (Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2011). It also performs a fundamental function in the continuous construction and maintenance of a healthy self-concept (Adamson et al., 1998). This aspect can be linked to the cognitive crafting component of career crafting, where it is proposed that individuals can visualize their career goals and act to achieve their desired outcomes.

The creation of a future, however, is not entirely in their hands, as the various roles they play in the personal and professional capacity are important in career decisions. The individual is not one self, but many selves, and each must live through a period of transition in which they rethink and
reconfigure a multitude of possibilities. Individuals are not static fully informed identities; rather we move and adjust through various roles within our own life journeys (Del Corso & Rehfuss, 2011). Moreover, as proposed by Deutsch and Krauss (1965) in the role theory, all societies are characterised by a large number of status systems and accompanying roles of a variety of kinds. In many such systems, ascribed positions are allocated on the basis of what one is; while achieved positions are determined by what one does or in a combination with role ascription. For example, a partnership in an accounting firm is an achieved status, but ascribed characteristics of gender (male) and/or family status (women without children or single) may facilitate or prevent gaining the position (Lehman, 1996; Schneer & Reitman, 2002). Thus, development of possible selves depends as much on the individual as also on both an organisation’s and a society's norms and status system.

Personal characteristics

Individuals need various qualities in order to develop their careers. One of these is self-efficacy, an individual’s belief that they have the power and ability to produce an intended effect or to make a difference. This enables individuals to feel they have the capability and competence to effect change or exercise control in their environment (Bandura, 1997; Baumeister & Vohs, 2002). Another is proactivity, which can enhance workplace performance as well as generate positive outcomes beyond work performance and obtaining employment (Kanfer, Wanberg, & Kantrowitz, 2001), and career satisfaction (Seibert & Kraimer, 2001).

It has been argued that creative individuals are remarkable for their ability to adapt to different situations and to manage with whatever is needed to reach their goals (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997). In addition, they appear to have a great deal of physical energy; they work long hours, with great concentration, while projecting an aura of freshness and enthusiasm. Csikszentmihalyi further noted that the energy of these people is internally generated and stems from their focus. This energy contributes to the creative process, and consists of preparation, incubation, insight, evaluation, and elaboration.

Along with the above qualities, Greenblatt (2002) suggested that there are four resources at an individual’s disposal; temporal, financial, control (the ability to select outcomes), and personal characteristics which reside within the individual. Bandura (2001) maintained that the capacity to exercise control over the nature and quality of one’s life is the essence of humanness.

The above mentioned individual qualities are crucial for career decisions, but individuals do not have direct control over the external conditions that affect their everyday lives. As Bird (2006) argued, individual choice can be seen as circumscribed by prevailing national gender cultures and expectations and labour market opportunities, socioeconomic group, and the stage in their individual life course. Dalziel and Saunders (2014) affirmed that we live in societies where powerful economic
and social forces affect personal capabilities in systematic ways. Thus, it can be summarised that along with the individual factors, external factors of family, organisation and environment also play a vital role in shaping career pathways. The following three sections elaborate.

2.3.2 Family

A family can be understood as a couple, with or without children, or one parent with children, usually living together in a household (Families & Whanau Status Report, 2014). Two aspects of family life can have an influence on career decisions, family of orientation – commonly known as one’s natal family, and one’s family of procreation – the family one creates with a life partner (Parkin, 1997).

Work and family represent relatively distinct yet interconnected domains of a person’s life (Kanter, 1977; Voydanoff, 2001). Families may enhance positive meanings of work by offering a supportive and relaxing environment, and by giving such assistance as money, labour or guidance (Brief & Nord, 1990). Positive relationships have been observed between the social support received from a family member and career success (Adams, King, & King, 1996; Friedman & Greenhaus, 2000; Voydanoff, 2001).

Moreover, families are important as work-family enrichment is thought to be bi-directional. Seligman (2002) has shown that experiences and material resources gathered in one role, work or family, can also affect performance in the other role. When individuals receive extensive resources from a role performance, their positive affect in that role is increased, which, in turn, is likely to facilitate their functioning in other roles (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006).

A defining trend of the 2000-2010 decade has been identified as the increasing diversity of families and workplaces. Families increasingly diverged from the two-parent, two-child family with a male breadwinner to divorced parents with joint custody, and single parent families (Bianchi & Milkie, 2010). For example, according to New Zealand Census 2013, 40.9 per cent of families were without children. Of the 59.1 per cent families with children, 41.3 per cent were couples with children, and the remaining 17.8 per cent one parent with children (2013 Census, 2014).

Family of orientation

A comprehensive overview of research on children’s career development presented by Watson and McMahon (2005) highlighted the need to understand more holistically the influences on and processes of career development learning in children. Psychologists and sociologists have

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4 The Statistics NZ definition of family is two or more people living in the same household, who are either a couple with or without children, or one parent and their children. The definition of family excludes parents and children who live in different households.
emphasised the important role played by the early childhood environment, mainly comprising family of origin and school, in forming career pathways (Brown, 2002). As noted above, the family of orientation refers to the family into which one is born or adopted (Parkin, 1997), and includes mainly parents, as well as all those relations who play an active role in the individual’s development. It is often cited as the most significant influence on primary career development constructs. This notion has been confirmed by several theorists; clearly vocational development begins during childhood and that family contextual factors affect the child’s and adolescent’s vocational development (Bryant, Zvonkovic, & Reynolds, 2006; Hartung, Porfeli, & Vondracek, 2005; Higgins, Vaughan, Phillips, & Dalziel, 2008; Savickas, 2002; Schulenberg, Vondracek, & Crouter, 1984; Whiston & Keller, 2004).

The family of orientation plays a significant role because a young person spends his or her formative years in this family (Whiston & Keller, 2004), and it serves as the context of socialisation of the individual. The family’s influence on vocational development thus lies along two dimensions: by providing opportunities, and through socialization (Schulenberg et al., 1984). As part of the socialisation process, vocational development begins much earlier in the life span than generally assumed, before adolescence, and what children learn about work and occupations has a profound effect on the choices they make about their occupational careers (Hartung et al., 2005).

Moreover, family plays an important role in terms of parental encouragement in the pursuit of knowledge, intellectual discipline, and introducing children to career opportunities (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997). Families have also been found to have a powerful influence on career pathway choices, as family relationships are the mechanisms by which young people craft identities. Family members are therefore typically the key to this, as trusted sources of information, and by offering emotional and financial support in relation to career decisions (Higgins et al., 2008). To sum up, family of orientation plays a major role in creating a career, and as a consequence must be recognised as a part of the process of further career development.

**Family of procreation**

Family of procreation as the name suggests, is the family an adult creates with his/her partner, it also includes their children if any. It has been affirmed that individual lives are vastly influenced by the distinct institutions of work and family (Mesmer-Magnus & Viswesvaran, 2005). Largely, it is likely to be quite demanding with a heavy impact on one’s work and family through having to manage demands for time, energy and economic resources. As a result, relationships between work and family are characterized by both, conflict and support (Adams, King, & King, 1996). People can be seen as border crossers who make daily transitions between the physically and temporally separate worlds of work and family (Clark, 2000).
Children have a major impact on career development as seen in the discussion below. Child-care forms the nucleus of what much work-family conflict is about – the question of how to care for children adequately when parents need or want to work outside the home is a very powerful one (Bianchi & Milkie, 2010). Dalziel and Saunders (2014) asserted in their book *Wellbeing Economics* that the most obvious issue in creating well-being is the capability of people to balance their time committed to the care of children and their time devoted to earning income and advancing careers in market employment. Thus, managing interactions between different life domains and investigating their mutual influence is a paramount concern for the present effort.

It has been observed that despite the increase in fathers’ involvement in the home, child care has remained much more the purview of mothers than fathers. As a consequence, work and family obligations exact large allotments of time from women, and the time pressure they feel is a particularly important type of conflict for both work and family (Bianchi & Milkie, 2010). Bianchi and Milkie further comment that this is especially so, as the low-control tasks, defined as the traditional “female” jobs, must be done on a daily basis and often at specific times. This is likely to leave the woman with little or no personal control over her work life.

It has been suggested that when examining the impact of one’s personal life on work, it must be recognised that each individual has fixed amounts of physical and psychological resources (e.g. time, mental energy, etc.). Thereby, conflicts from one direction, i.e. work; are likely to be coupled with expressions of conflict from the other direction, i.e. personal life (Netemeyer, Boles, & McMurrian, 1996). Therefore, one’s spouse in particular has been found to play a vital role in terms of sharing responsibilities and offering support, as explained below.

**Role of the spouse**

It has been identified that an individual’s work and family trajectories are often linked to those of their spouses. Spousal support theory has long suggested that a spouse provides additional resources for job performance (Kanter, 1977). Specifically, women’s participation in paid labour has been found to be positively associated with the egalitarian gender role attitudes of their partners (Bolzendahl & Myers, 2004). It has been documented that women consider support at home as vital, even if they have access to other support sources (Coyne & DeLongis, 1986), and husbands/partners play an important role in career decisions of women (Corrigall & Konrad, 2007). Moreover, spouses provide a sense of stability at home, help with child care, alleviate work-life conflict and hence, are critical for working individuals (Gordon & Whelan-Berry, 2004; Janning, 2006; Rao, Apte, & Subbakrishna, 2003). Thereby, a person’s career development is tied to the career decisions of the spouse (Bianchi & Milkie, 2010).
Furthermore, it has been observed that the three dimensions of status – marital, parental and spousal employment – are arguably the most relevant to career success (Schneer & Reitman, 2002). Spousal employment status appears to be an especially important dimension of family structure, as for example, having a child has very different career implications if one is married with a stay-at-home spouse versus married with an employed spouse. It has been documented that both men and women clearly benefit from having a non-employed and supportive spouse (Kirchmeyer, 2006).

A study on gender role attitudes and domestic division of labour suggests that a sustained rethinking of the family division of labour might result in improvements to satisfaction for both men and women (Crompton & Lyonette, 2005). Crompton and Lyonette’s multi-country study revealed that congruent liberals, that is, men and women with liberal gender attitudes and a less traditional division of domestic labour reported significantly lower levels of work-life conflict than either inconsistent respondents or congruent traditional with less liberal gender attitude and a traditional division of domestic labour.

Thus, as identified above, spouses play an important role in terms of offering support. Ezzedeen and Ritchey (2008) have specified six spousal support categories that can have significant effects on career pathways. They are emotional support, household help, help with children, esteem support, career support, and overall support. These are adapted later in Chapter 4 on analysing career pathways to categorise the support the research participants have received from their spouses.

A more equal sharing of caring and domestic work is clearly a personal issue, and can likely be worked out with negotiation. The increased participation of women in the workforce has brought about a reduction in the time available for the work of families, and has created the necessity of balancing the demands of the workplace with those of family and household labour (Bartley, Blanton, & Gilliard, 2005). As the proportion of women in the work force and rise of women to higher positions in organisations increase, their earnings are likely to influence the division of labour within households. In particular, it has been documented that women’s ability to bargain over the household tasks is enhanced when their earnings are relatively larger compared with their spouse’s earnings (Cunningham, 2007). Thus, this has resulted in a shift in the roles men and women play. This is further examined below.

**Paradigm shift in spousal support**

One of the major changes in the past few decades is the clearly defined traditional roles of husbands as breadwinners and wives as homemakers have been replaced by new roles required by the rise in dual career couples. This has resulted in another significant change that has happened on the family front – a notable shift in the culture of fatherhood.
The paradigm shift in the way that traditional roles are viewed has meant breaking down old-fashioned roles for fathers as well. This has resulted, in some cases, in fathers taking up the role of a primary caregiver. Though mothers still bear the vast majority of responsibility for young children, and parental care by fathers still remains a fraction of that of mothers (Wall & Arnold, 2007), this relatively new phenomenon – the stay-at-home-father or “house-husband” – has developed in more recent years (Doucet & Merla, 2007). As indicated by Benko and Weisberg (2007), this has been possible mainly because modern societies have reached a point where behavioural expectations for roles have widened and previously exclusive roles played by men and women can be performed by either partner, signalling this change.

These kinds of employment-family-related gender role changes have been documented for some time. Research provides several often cited reasons for men becoming full-time fathers. These include a man’s lack of attachment to and participation in the paid workforce and issues reflecting household economics, a general shift to less traditional gender role attitudes, the state of the job market (particularly the loss of full-time jobs for men), and the growth of female participation in different occupations. Other explanations for this change in gender roles are women’s increasing influence in terms of earning power, a shift in attitudes toward gender equality, positive views on increased parental involvement by both mothers and fathers, and non-availability of government support for the family and childcare (Doucet & Merla, 2007; Fisher & Anderson, 2012; Grbich, 1995; Kildare, 2007).

This has also resulted in the identification of new challenges for full-time fathers, including the negative social perception of this new and different non-traditional role. Research reveals that it may sometimes result in strong feelings of social isolation, social stigma from their role as full-time fathers, lowered confidence, exclusion from established networks of mothers, difficulty in re-entering the workforce and demands to justify their absence from the workforce (Doucet & Merla, 2007; Kildare, 2007; Rochlen, Suizzo, McKelley, & Scaringi, 2008).

Sinno and Killen (2009) conducted a study of children from traditional (with working fathers) and from unconventional (with full-time house husbands) families. In general, children from both the groups perceived mothers as better in household jobs like cooking, than their fathers. However, the traditional nature of the family clearly played a big part in their opinions about working arrangements. It was an interesting revelation of the survey that a large proportion of children from traditional families judged it as unacceptable for the father to stay at home, but as acceptable for the mother.

It is also interesting to note reactions of the wider families, as one of the female participants of this study who has a stay-at-home partner stated, “Yes, and working occasionally, he does bits and pieces
here. That’s since we’ve got married, that’s always been like that, much to my mother-in-law’s disgust (emphasis added).”

**House-husbands in New Zealand**

At this point, it is pertinent to refer to the scenario in New Zealand. It is difficult to gain a robust view of the number of full time fathers as neither the Census nor other surveys clearly specify a figure. However, available information is indicative. The New Zealand census from 2013 provides information about families and households, with information on the fathers’ job status: 7.4 per cent of fathers were not in paid work, compared to 32 per cent of mothers (2013 Census, 2014). Another major statistical source, Statistics New Zealand’s Time Use Survey (2011) presents data on the work statuses of parents in three categories – both parents in full-time employment; mother part-time and father full-time; and mother not working, father working. Note the lack of comment on a “mother working, father not working” category. However, it also presents information about caring for children. For example, when couples have a young child (under five years), “mother-only” care comprises 59 per cent of the parental childcare time on weekdays, compared to 6 per cent of “father-only” care and 34 per cent of “shared parental care”. Thus, the proportion of father-only carers is about 6 per cent, which is not a high per cent but certainly indicates the emergence of a new statistical category where fathers are primary care-givers.

Thus, to summarise the role of family it can be said that family of orientation plays a prominent role primarily in early career decisions and forming of career choices. Family of procreation, formed later in adulthood, understandably plays a major role in terms of support and responsibilities in the later years of career development.

### 2.3.3 Organisation

There are two major types of external organisations which seem to play an important role in career development – school in case of early career decisions, and workplace for the later career. Super (1980) has documented that the amount and type of schooling is one determinant of occupation entered with the first occupational position, and workplace is another determinant of later occupational positions open to the individual. Both these influences are examined below.

**School**

Education has long been considered central to young people’s discovery and development of abilities and aspirations strongly relevant to their career choices and progress (Higgins et al., 2008). There are various aspects to the influence of schools on career decisions.

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5 It is likely that this includes single fathers.
Csikszentmihalyi (1997) observed that individual teachers often awaken, sustain or direct a child’s interest. It has also been identified that the subject choices offered by schools play a major role in career choices (Grainger, 1992). Dalziel (2012) has noted that a young person in secondary school makes important career choices by choosing what subjects to study; choices about how hard to study; choices about how to study both inside and outside the classroom; choices about how to integrate study and their life experiences. Moreover, Du Plessis and Sutherland (2016) identified that there are significant under-identified, untapped numbers of girls in New Zealand who are not sufficiently encouraged by schools to consider as a matter of course, the whole spectrum of subjects and career paths that are available to boys. Over time, these help to determine the pathway constructed in the world of work. These various influences of school acting upon initial career development of participants will be explored in this research.

**Workplace**

It is well-recognised that people spend nearly half of their waking life in paid employment and therefore organisations play an important role in career development. This can work in two ways – by facilitating opportunities for growth or creating constraints in terms of choices. Moreover, as has been long advocated by Trist (1981), the intricacy of the issue arises from the wide range of individual differences, wherein not all workers want "enriched" jobs or more responsibility. The modern workforce is also likely to be diverse in terms of background, personal circumstances, expectations, and aspirations (Benko & Weisberg, 2007) across all those participating. Therefore, organisations need to understand the variety of career patterns and to realign strategies to suit this diverse workforce (Brousseau, Driver, Eneroth, & Larson, 1996). They also need to be aware of this shift so they can create successful employment relationships and maintain a reasonable level of stability for the organisation.

Researchers acknowledge a need to examine the different ways in which employees themselves take the initiative to modify their own jobs, roles and tasks (Grant & Parker, 2009; Oldham & Hackman, 2010). The new relationship between the worker and the work has created the need to develop new ways to match their needs to that of the work context. The rapidly changing environment, financial crises, technological innovation, and the entry of new generations into the work force call for solutions that lie in finding ways to increase person-job fit (Hall & Heras, 2010).

Thus, the concept of work needs to be redefined because what constitutes the workplace and the content and nature of work has evolved. Such a definition will need to incorporate one’s job, one’s role set, the context of work, and the self at work (Wrzesniewski, Dutton, & Debebe, 2003). The focus thereby has to be on questions like where do employees find meaningfulness in their work, how can different meanings be made out of similar jobs and how have meanings changed over time.
This re-casting of the concept might also include the personal and organisational implications of holding different beliefs about the meaning of work (Rosso et al., 2010).

Boxall and Purcell (2011) advocated that such relationships will depend on mutuality and reciprocity, which means that along with employee performance and productivity, organisations also need to think about what employees find attractive about their work. The following three factors have been found to be significant in the role organisations play in determining this.

**Work design**

Traditionally, the approach to the design of work was generally top-down in nature, where higher level management set mission and goals and instructed lower level managers what they needed to accomplish, who further implemented the plans through the lower level members. As a result, work design researchers assumed that managers were responsible for structuring jobs for employees to carry out (Hackman, Oldham, Janson, & Purdy, 1975; Hackman & Oldham, 1980). Employees tended to be portrayed as “lumps of clay, ready to be shaped by all those around them” (Bell & Staw, 1989, p. 232).

However, this has changed as organisations started shifting from production economies to knowledge economies. Such a change required them to rely on employees to engage in proactive behaviour in order to promote creativity, innovation and change (Frese, Erez, Kleinbeck, & Thierry, 2001; Morrison & Phelps, 1999; Parker et al., 2010). While “provisioning” is still the main motive for working, research points to the rise of “expressivism” in the workforce. It refers to the motivation of many employees to find greater avenues for personal fulfilment as they develop over their working life (Boxall & Purcell, 2011) and contribute to the commercial success of their employers.

As a result, scholars began to rethink theories of work design (Morgeson & Campion, 2003). This is reciprocated by current research suggesting that employees are keen to deploy their talents effectively in work design. It has been observed that employees can set goals for themselves and create their own rewards (Frese et al., 2001), and it has been established that employees do not just let life happen to them. Rather, they try to “affect, shape, curtail, expand, and tamper what happens in their lives” (Grant & Ashford, 2008, p. 4). Hence, they are increasingly likely to be active participants in work design (Grant & Parker, 2009; Parker & Ohly, 2008).

It has been discovered that employee-initiated changes in the design of their jobs results in more challenging and meaningful work, and is likely to foster positive work and personal outcomes (Oldham & Hackman, 2010). Moreover, it has been recognized that when job demands and the individual are aligned, people experience positive emotional states and they perceive themselves as engaged, productive and progressing in their careers (Harter & Arora, 2010). This emotional well-
being and effectiveness can be facilitated by organisations through management of job demands and job resources – physical, psychological, social, and organisational aspects of the job (Bakker, Hakanen, Demerouti, & Xanthopoulou, 2007; Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001).

Thus, the way that work is designed by organisations, such as the degree of variety and challenge in the job or the level of work demands, can have a critical influence on job satisfaction and employees’ performance. These can also have a positive and thus justifiable impact on organisational performance (Latham & Pinder, 2005; Parker & Ohly, 2008). The emerging domain of positive organisational scholarship is concerned primarily with this aspect – the study of positive processes, outcomes, and attributes of organisations and their members. It puts an increased emphasis on positive human potential. It seeks to understand what represents and approaches the best of human conditions (Cameron, Dutton, & Quinn, 2003).

Finally, work design is also important because it has been observed that both men and women of the new generation of employees are more likely than their predecessors to be dual-centric, that is, to give as much importance to work as they do to the family (Moen & Roehling, 2005). This gives rise to the issue of work-life balance, to be discussed next.

**Facilitating work-life balance**

It has been shown that employees’ control over when, where, and how much they work is an important remedy to time pressures and work-life conflicts. Such control has potential health, well-being, and productivity benefits (Kelly & Moen, 2007). A meta-analytical study examined the impact of flexitime schedules, revealing that they positively affect employee productivity, job satisfaction, satisfaction with the work schedule, and employee absenteeism (Baltes, Briggs, Huff, Wright, & Neuman, 1999). Several researchers have advocated the use of flexible work schedules as they help employees better manage the conflict between work and family (Almer, Cohen, & Single, 2003; Cohen & Single, 2001; Friedman & Greenhaus, 2000; Hill, Hawkins, Ferris, & Weitzman, 2001).

Family-responsive human resource policies, which include not only flexible work arrangements but also family-leave policies and child or elder-care assistance, have been adopted by many organisations to help employees achieve a better balance between work and family (Rau & Hyland, 2006). This is so that employees, particularly women, are not forced to choose family over work, a situation which is likely to be detrimental to both employee and organisation. As it has also been observed that some women who are faced with this conflict prefer to sacrifice advancement at work to devote adequate time to their families (Rogier & Padgett, 2004). Research indicates that if given the opportunity to have a flexible work schedule, and consequently a greater ability to balance work and family, career-oriented women are more likely to remain in their jobs, even when these are demanding.
It has been confirmed that individuals and organisations alike suffer when people do not experience emotional well-being at their work place (French, 2010). Therefore, organisations may have to provide mechanisms to help employees balance the demands of work and the responsibilities of home, as in particular, lack of managerial support has been recognised as significantly related to work-to-family conflict (Anderson, Coffey, & Byerly, 2002). However, organisations have to take care while designing the flexible schedules, as it has also been observed that sometimes these can have adverse effects on career progression. This is discussed below.

The downside of flexible work schedules

Contrary to the above discussion, research studies have also found that flexible schedules may have an adverse effect on upward mobility in the careers of people using those (Cohen & Single, 2001). For example, in order to assess the impact of flexible schedule on career development, a study was conducted with seventy-eight women managers and professionals who had used a reduced workload flexible schedule (MacDermid, Lee, Buck, & Williams, 2001). Most of the respondents felt that they had sacrificed some upward mobility in their careers, especially in the short run. This could be because managers perceive that a female employee using a flexible work schedule might have less career advancement potential (Rogier & Padgett, 2004).

In a more rigorous experimental study, for example, Cohen and Single (2001) had Big Five accounting firm managers review a scenario describing a manager who either was or was not on a reduced-workload flexible schedule. The participants then evaluated that manager’s desirability for an engagement, perceived likelihood of advancement, and perceived likelihood of turnover. The study showed that the manager was perceived more negatively on all three dependent variables when described as being on a flexible schedule than when described as being on a regular work schedule.

Consequently, “career derailment” becomes a concern of employees, who are using, or considering using, a flexible work schedule (Hammonds et.al. 1997 as cited in Rogier & Padgett, 2004). It appears that they fear they will be seen as less committed to their career if they adopt a flexible schedule, or perhaps that they will be less visible to those making advancement decisions (an “out-of-sight, out-of-mind” problem).

Seabright (2012) describes this as the signalling trap, which means working long hours to send a signal of commitment to the boss. It is likely that most married women are not willing to extend their working day with overtime for family reasons. Therefore, organisations may need to create mechanisms to avoid these perceptual biases – of managers as well as employees – and create a favourable culture where all employees can contribute to the best of their circumstances.
Conducive corporate culture

The above discussion documents that the workplace is not a static environment. It is clear there have been interesting developments in organisational life over the past few decades that have made the workplace a very different environment. Creating an appropriate, inclusive and adaptive corporate culture is essential, as this has been found to be the most significant driver for women’s confidence in success (Devillard, Sancier, Werner, Maller, & Kossoff, 2013). The behavioural styles that are most valued in traditionally masculine cultures are often unnatural for high-potential women. As a consequence, women are still perceived as “risky” appointments for high level roles by often male-dominated committees (Ibarra, Carter, & Silva; 2010).

Moreover, the interpersonal dynamics that unfold between people at work creates a powerful context which leads to work satisfaction (Wrzesniewski et al., 2003). Other people in organisations play a critical role in the valuing of the work that employees do, the roles they play and the people they are, thus making high quality connections in organisations vital for effective functioning (Dutton & Heaphy, 2003).

This suggests that research focusing on the social aspects of the work itself and its potential for social satisfaction (Grant & Parker, 2009) is timely. Oldham and Hackman (2010) advise that more research on the impact of the social interaction and how contemporary employees frame their work and assess their work-life balance is necessary. This research includes these social aspects of work-life in this study through relational crafting at work, in order to understand the impact of culture on people’s satisfaction.

Thus, it has been established that individual, family and organisations play an important role in career development. This brings us to the final and the most comprehensive factor determining career pathways – external environment. Basically, the environment can be categorized into various components – personal, organisational and external. The first two components were discussed in the above sections wherein the personal environment included family support structures, individual dispositions, and developmental life stages, and the organisational factors were school and workplace. The third element, external environment is discussed next.

2.3.4 External environment

This study recognizes that the external environment largely comprises economic, social, cultural, political, legal, technological, natural, and global factors. Dawis (2002) proposed in the Person-Environment (P-E) theory that a person “P” cannot be understood without considering the environment “E”. P and E act on and react to the other, and they are influential in the interaction in
generating mutual impact. In the same vein, Gottfredson (2002) recognized that environments are both causes and effects — that people shape the environments that shape them.

Similarly, Stead (2004) asserted that people create and are also created by cultures in a complex matrix of interweaving relationships. Stead acknowledged culture as an important focal point in understanding relationships and also that cultures are neither static nor independent variables, and are centrally embedded in career psychology. Therefore, environments from the past, present and the future, the interaction of the person with these environments, and the way the environments are observed and interpreted by the individual need to be acknowledged while studying careers.

It has been recognised that the career decision-making process is likely to involve where, how, how much and what one explores (Stumpf, Colarelli, & Hartman, 1983). Individuals need to obtain adequate information about their environment in order to be adaptable, willing and able to change behaviours (Ashford & Taylor, 1990). However, it has also been acknowledged that career development is not just a cognitive process, and there are often potent barriers in the environment restricting choice, change and growth (Lent et al., 2002). Gottfredson’s theory of circumscription (2002) examined the impact of external influences on career considerations. She delineated the process by which people circumscribe and compromise their career options to obtain the best fit within their reach.

The preceding discussion has elaborated on interesting and distinct factors that influence career development. It has established that this process depends on the capability of an individual to make an appropriate choice, taking into account the complexity of family, organisational and environmental factors that influence career development. Specifically, this research is interested in exploring the career pathways of both men and women, and understanding the effect of career crafting on their decisions. The discussion has referred to a few issues related to gender, but it is necessary to look closer, deeper, so as to understand the nuances of career development for men and women. In order to address Research Question 4 in an effort to investigate gendered career patterns, it is imperative to study the larger context and to familiarise with the undercurrents.

2.4. Gender and career

Traditional roles dictate that, the family and household labour were the domains of women, whereas work in the marketplace was the domain of men. It has been argued that societies and economies were originally created on the basis of an identity-driven and identity-shaping separation of the spheres of existence of men and women (Lansky, 2000). However, dramatic demographic and social changes have occurred in the 20th century. This was mainly during and following World War II, which
has led to redefinition of gender roles and has considerably changed the workplace in developed societies. This evolution has taken place gradually, over a period of time as discussed below.

Goldin (2006) has analysed the changes in women’s labour participation by dividing the 20th century into four phases. During phase one (late 19th century to the 1920s), few adult and married women were in the labour force. Substantial social stigma existed mainly due to the nature of the jobs, which were dirty, dangerous and long in hours per day. In phase two (1930s to 1950) labour force participation by women increased substantially. The greatly increased demand for women to do office and clerical work meant that the workplace could be respectable, and it demonstrated to employers that they were profitable to employ. However, as Goldin commented, “wives were less often secondary workers, the flotsam and jetsam of the labour market” (p. 32). Nieva and Gutek (1981) also noted that, during this phase, World War II played a major role in these changes, as the onset of the war sparked a sharp increase in their participation in the labour force.

During the third phase (1950s to 1970s), married women’s labour force participation continued to expand, with other social changes contributing to the expansion. In the 1960s, widespread availability of oral contraceptives helped young women plan their work life. There was an enormous increase in working married women, but work was still considered a job, rather than a career. These changes also had an impact on the social definition of feminity. In her 1963 book *The Feminine Mystique*, Friedan defined the book’s title phrase as “the highest value and the only commitment for women, which is the fulfilment of their own feminity” (p. 38).

The fourth phase (late 1970s onwards) was characterised by a focus on career, and as such represented a revolutionary shift away from the earlier phases. Women increased their investments in formal schooling and focussed on career streams as a result of the greater choice over reproduction. This phase emphasised woman’s ability to incorporate a career into their identity, and enhanced their ability to make joint decisions with their spouses through the greater equality a career represented.

In an interview with Gerassi (1976) De Beauvoir observed that in the 1970s many social changes occurred with the advent of new technologies. In agreement with this view, Gerassi remarked that because technology depended upon the power of brain and not brawn, women no longer had to play a secondary role to men; they were no longer the “weaker sex”. Also during the 1970s, the women’s movement and the growth of professional and managerial employment opportunities gave women, especially college-educated women, new options and opportunities. At the same time, as Stone and

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6 Simone de Beauvoir (1908 - 1986) was a French writer, philosopher, political activist and social theorist. She had a significant influence on feminist theory. She is known for her 1949 treatise *The Second Sex.*
Hernandez (2012) commented, this also created new obligations, as it was built on the male-as-breadwinner model, and required high levels of work commitment and continuity.

There are several studies that indicate the gendered patterns of employment in professionals; “glass ceiling” has been identified as the main cause of the pyramidal structure of the organisations where women hold proportionately fewer positions at the top (Burke & Mattis, 2005; Global diversity rankings, 2012; McGregor, 2005). The literature also introduced the concept of “glass cliff”, which depicts the difficult journey of women up the management hierarchy (Ryan & Haslam, 2005). Further, Bruckmuller and Branscombe (2011) found that as women achieve high profile positions, they are more likely than men to find themselves on a “glass cliff”, as these women were more likely to rise to positions of organisational leadership in times of crisis than in times of success. Another study by Williams (1992) found that the forms and consequences of gender discrimination might be different for men and women. Her study focused on men working in female dominated occupations (for e.g. nursing). It was identified that in fact men were given a fair treatment in hiring and promotion decisions, and the mechanisms seemed to enhance their position in these professions. Williams termed this as “glass escalators” – facilitating an easier ascent for men in these sectors.

To summarise, although there are early roots of women in the paid work, they slowly began increasing their numbers in professional and managerial jobs in the later part of the last century. In preparation for these roles, greater number of women have attended university, out-performing males in many cases, achieved the work experiences necessary for career advancement, and did their jobs at arguably the same level as men; but promotions for women lagged behind (Burke & Vinnicombe, 2006). The following sections further discuss the gender differences, highlighting the different career patterns of men and women and identifying their effect on the career development.

### 2.4.1 Gender differences

The undeniable career differences between men and women are extensive and persistent. There is, however, a disagreement as to their roots, as there are different strands of research that examine these differences. Crompton and Lynette (2005), for example, observed that gender essentialists believed that biological differences lead to behavioural differences, whereas feminists argued that although there are biological sex differences, most of the inequalities expressed in the gender hierarchies are socially constructed. As Friedan (1963) argued, women had to adjust to the conventional definition of women solely in terms of their sexual relation to men and their biological role as mothers. They could never realise their human potential, as they were made to believe that truly feminine women do not want careers. All they had to do was devote their lives to finding a husband and rearing children.
In an interview with Gerassi (1976), Simone de Beauvoir acknowledged that in writing the book *The Second Sex* in 1949, she became aware of gender differences. Until then, she had unknowingly accepted male values and was living accordingly. She also had the luck to come from a sector of the society wherein she could enter the man’s world without much difficulty. She said, “I was leading a false life, or rather, that I was profiting from this male-oriented society without even knowing it... and that reinforced in me the belief that man and woman could be equal if the woman wanted such equality." (p. 79). She added that while researching and writing the book, she realised that the vast majority of women simply did not have the choices she had had.

Several researchers have inferred that men and women differ in their values, attitudes, and behaviour, partly because of gender roles and gender stereotypes. One of the main differences that impacts studying men’s and women’s careers is the space families take in women’s lives. This influence expands and contracts in cycles over the years. It is argued that we have unavoidably brought our more inclusive and circular lives – lives that expand and contract as the demands of the family wax and wane – to bear on a linear system of career progression (McKenna, 1997). Further, Bandura (1997) noted that there is considerable variation among working women in the types of role demands they face, in the degree to which work and family demands conflict and disruptively intrude into one another. The level of shared responsibility for the care of children and household is different for men and women, which is reflected in the types of stressors, satisfactions, and feelings of accomplishment women experience at home and at work.

This is mainly because education, career and family formation pathways are woven together in the early adult years. Educational attainment has a delaying effect on child-bearing, but on the other hand entry into parenthood also limits women’s educational attainment. The age at which young men and women enter family roles has historically had important consequences for occupational attainment. Family roles continue to affect careers across the life course, as women’s work patterns, in particular, are tied to changes in their family roles (Brewster & Rindfuss, 2000; Johnson & Mortimer, 2002; McKenna, 1997).

Personal variables similarly influence women’s career choices and a number of demographic variables and thus includes economic considerations. Rates of pay, convenience, home responsibilities, husband’s attitudes, among other influences, affect the jobs they finally obtain (Nieva & Gutek, 1981). Women’s socialization is often such that strong internal conflicts and barriers develop. These further restrict their range of options (Hackett & Betz, 1981). Logically, it is apparent that a socialization process which gives primacy to nurturing and secondary priority to career or achieving, leads to home-career conflicts and is likely to interfere with serious career planning.
Thus, women’s belief or disbelief in their capabilities and their career aspirations are shaped by the family, the educational system, occupational practices, the mass media, and the culture at large (Hackett & Betz, 1981). It has been identified that male cultural behaviours (‘harmless’ joking, ‘laddish’ conversation, discussion of male interests, and in extreme form harassment) are found stressful and may have a negative effect on women’s confidence and affect their ability to present themselves successfully (Panteli, Stack, & Ramsey, 2001). They further commented that women find themselves in a catch-22 situation, as women with traditional feminine work styles, seeking consensus and team effort, are seen as less confident and capable than men; while those women who emulate masculine behaviour are seen as aggressive and disliked by men for not conforming to feminine stereotypes.

Values may affect a wide spectrum of behaviour across situations and gender has systematic effects on value priorities. Women tend to attribute more importance to self-transcendence and conservation values; and men value openness and self-enhancement more (Schwartz & Rubel-Lifschitz, 2009). As a result, women are still more likely than men to make employment concessions for family responsibilities (Baker, 2008).

The crucial content aspect that differentiates values is the type of motivational goal they express. Men tend to construe success more in terms of self-development and personal accomplishments, and women more in terms of family (Struch, Schwartz, & Van Der Kloot, 2002). Women generally place more importance on the convenience dimension of work than do men. It has been noted that women are more concerned than men with the welfare of other people (Eagly, 1987), and that interpersonal relationships are more important to women than to men (Williams & Best, 1990). Thus, the ongoing struggle for balance between agency (individual) and communion (individual as a part of a larger group) has been suggested as being central to women’s career development (Bakan, 1966; Lips-Wiersma, 2002).

In addition, women’s conception of the self has been found to be more relational when compared with men’s (Garbarino, Gaa, Swank, McPherson, & Gratch, 1995). That is, women more than men define their selves in relationship to others (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). As a result, women’s career histories are more likely to be relational than men’s and their career decisions are often part of a larger and intricate web of interconnected people and issues (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005).

In contrast, men more than women appear to have assertive and controlling tendencies, resulting in greater independence from others (Eagly, 1987; Williams & Best, 1990), as a result individualistic tasks and goals tend to be more important for men than for women (Venkatesh, Morris, & Ackerman, 2000). For example, a survey conducted by Hewlett and Luce (2005) revealed that men
and women leave the fast track of careers for dramatically different reasons – family time is the first of the five main reasons for women and conversely it is the last of the five main reasons for men.

It has been demonstrated that the women’s attitudes and views towards the effects of maternal employment on child well-being have the strongest “effect” on their labour market participation (Steiber & Haas, 2009). Wall and Arnold (2007) reasoned that women attach secondary importance to careers because the persistence of many traditional cultural understandings of motherhood result in women feeling much more anxiety and guilt about caregiving issues than fatherhood does.

Thus, another main reason for the traditional pattern has been married women’s conventional attitudes toward gender roles, where they are often willing to be (or unable to object to being) burdened with the household tasks despite performing a main breadwinner role (Bartley et al., 2005). For example, a study of married and working women revealed that (in contradiction to conventional thinking) the refusal of promotion to a managerial level contributed to their well-being (Rao et al., 2003). This appeared to be because promotion would have meant longer hours on the job, and perhaps relocation, thereby upsetting the delicate balance between home and career. Thus, it might be that some women working at a career will not completely adopt a career-dominant attitude. This suggests that a blended form of role expectations for the modern career woman may exist, where some of the behaviours characteristic of the male career role are adopted whilst others are not.

Thus, a major factor underlying these different gendered career trajectories is that women still retain the major responsibility for domestic work and caring for family members. For women, life cycle stages and other factors are different from that of men. It is arguably more complex for women in terms of career trajectories and the effects of socialization on their attitudes, role expectations and resultant behaviours (Fitzgerald & Crites, 1980). For example, for many women, finding a career is more of a primary challenge early in one’s working life, but balancing family needs becomes a priority in mid-career despite marital status (Sullivan & Mainiero, 2008).

As a result, in general men and women continue to differ in their work orientations. These variations are linked to broader differences in life goals, and the relative importance of family life and careers (Hakim, 2004). Psychologically, career orientation depends on how feminine a woman regards herself, since preference for a career over family is not stereotypically feminine. Marshall and Wijting (1980) therefore posited that a strong career orientation seems more characteristic of women with predominantly masculine self-concepts.

However, the changing social situation has enabled the co-existence of multiple identities and subjective realities (Steiber & Haas, 2009). As explained earlier, the clearly defined work and family
roles of the traditional family model – husbands as breadwinners and wives as financially dependent homemakers – are being replaced by a model where in many cases both husband and wife are employed (Bartley et al., 2005), or in some cases where husband is a primary care-giver.

Lansky (2000) argued that as women have been moving out of their old preserves as homemakers and wives into competitive labour markets – from the private sphere into the public – men have failed to make commensurate progress the other way. This has created the need to re-negotiate family roles.

Organisations also play an important role in creating, influencing and maintaining gendered career patterns. Organisational structures, including managerial positions, are "gendered". Kaplan and Niederman (2006) cited some of the possible reasons for this gender disparity: lack of access to information networks, later career selection, limited vertical/internal mobility, inadequate social networks, and skill obsolescence.

Thus, all these factors are likely to have a significant impact on the structure of careers. There has been considerable research on the gendered career patterns in the past few decades – the different patterns and their effect on women’s career development are elaborated below.

### 2.4.2 Gendered career patterns

The above discussion has examined the reasons for significant gender differences, which result in different career patterns for men and women. Historically, married women assumed primary responsibility for the day-to-day work of caring for children (for example, when a child is ill) and maintaining the household (Walker, Tausky, & Oliver, 1982). Therefore, generally, careers were shaped by prevailing societal norms. For men the priorities were ordered – education, work and then family. However, for women the sequence was different – education, family and then work (These priorities are examined with regard to the research participants and observations are presented in the last chapter on conclusion).

Traditionally, masculinity has been associated with an instrumental orientation, a cognitive focus on getting the job done or the problem solved. In contrast, femininity has been associated with an expressive orientation, an affective concern for the welfare of others and harmony of the group (Friedan, 1963). Subsequently, men typically have a homogeneous pattern of career, with the majority of them work-oriented (Hakim, 2000). Men usually view career as a priority, whereas women do not show a definite pattern on their career graph. Hakim further maintained that though the majority of women seek a more equal balance between family work and gainful employ, they are diverse in their preferences and priorities with regard to resolving the conflict between family life and employment.
Thus, a more complete explanation of women’s labour market choices after childbirth, and of the outcomes of those choices, depends as much on understanding the constraints that differently affect women as it does on understanding their preferences (Walker et al., 1982). This explains the existence of a continuum of work-family preferences which comprises women with similar preferences, but with differing capacities for overcoming constraints, thus leading to very different careers (McRae, 2003). This results in a more heterogeneous pattern for women in employment and their work histories.

In seeking to explain observed patterns of work and motherhood, researchers have suggested that women try a variety of different work-family combinations over the years when their children need full time care. They are likely to move from one combination to another over time. Those who take a break for child-birth and return to work after a few years, do so for various reasons – financial considerations, the need to keep up with the career/skills, a need for intellectual stimulation, adult contact, self-esteem, and so on. These strategies have been examined in the literature, and are further described below.

“Sequencing” refers to a strategy whereby women pursue work or motherhood, typically working before having children, then leaving work in order to focus exclusively on childrearing, and returning to work after children become independent (Goldin, 2006). “Opting out” has also been used to describe the pattern, positioned as a lifestyle choice where a woman will take a prolonged period of time out of the labour force in order to care for her children (Belkin, 2003; Stone, 2007). Others have used the term, “Off ramping” in which women take time off from work, generally for family based reasons, maintain ties with their former employers and re-enter the workforce at a later date (Hewlett & Luce, 2005). Clearly these emphasise switching between roles for extended periods of time.

Based on these behaviours, researchers have identified different career patterns for men and women. The following are some examples of gendered patterns; presented chronologically:

1. Richardson (1974, as cited in Diamond, 1987) argued that the vocational decisions boys and girls face in schools appear to be similar, but as women progress through young adulthood, the meaning of those decisions becomes increasingly divergent with age. He described three career patterns with reference to women:

   a. Continuous uninterrupted work: This is characteristic of a woman who may not marry or who might delay marriage or childbearing until she is established in an occupation;
b. Equal priority: Work-oriented women who place equal priority on both aspects of their role development, dropping out of the workforce for limited periods of time; and

c. Homemaking women.

2. Super (1980) argued that the integration of biological, societal and psychological variables influence the development of a self-concept throughout the individual’s life span. By this view, men’s career patterns are essentially applicable to women if modified to take marriage and child bearing into account. Four patterns were described for men: stable, conventional, unstable and multiple trial. After modification, the patterns for women were more numerous: stable homemaking, conventional (working followed by marriage), stable working, double track (working while homemaking), interrupted, unstable, and multiple trial.

3. O’Leary, (1997) examined the concept of the “career-ambitious person” proposing a traditional male “corpocratic” model based on a linear, hierarchical progression, and a female “lifestream” career model depicting an interplay between work, relationships, organisational factors, and various life stages.

4. Hakim’s research (2000) identified three groups of women with regard to work-related preferences. Two minority groups were found; women showing either home-centered or work-centered preferences. The third majority group comprised those who showed adaptive lifestyle preferences, that is, those who wanted to reconcile family life and paid work.

5. O’Neil, Bilimoria and Saatcioglu (2004) identified four career types based on work-related experiences over the life course and the belief sets directing these work experiences. They termed them creating, achieving, navigating, and accommodating.

6. Burke, Vinnicombe, O’Neil, and Bilimoria (2005) recognised that women’s careers and life responsibilities ebb and flow according to life stage concerns. They proposed three age related phases; idealistic achievement, pragmatic endurance, and reinventive contribution.


8. O’Neil, Hopkins and Bilimoria, (2008) noted that women’s careers comprise more than “work”, they are embedded in women’s larger life contexts; and families and careers are central to women’s lives. Thus, women’s career paths reflect a wide range and variety of patterns, termed – downward, lateral, transitory, and static.
9. Whiting (2008) identified a variety of patterns in her study of professional accountants in New Zealand. These were termed traditional men (TM)- breadwinners with non-working or part-time working wives; traditional women (TW)- who worked part time and gave up or reduced work for children; work first women (WFW); family balancers (FB)- balance by both partners in work and family, and stepping stone men (SSM)- who are more involved in the family aiming for a more balanced lifestyle.

10. Lupu (2012) suggested that contrary to the linear progressive model of career ladder leading to the goal of partnership in accounting firms, women seem to follow a labyrinth pattern as a winding trajectory with detours, blind alleys, unusual paths, and early exits.

Though the above summary suggests a large variety of modalities, it can also be argued that the broad categories for women have remained the same – housewives, balancing home and work, and career oriented. However, whilst the categories may not have changed, researchers have observed that, with more women focusing on careers, the relative percentage of women who display each pattern has changed significantly (Hakim, 2000; Osipow & Fitzgerald, 1996).

From this variety of conceptualisations, it is possible to synthesise out three main types of gendered orientations:

1. **Focus on family** – homemaking/family first/stable homemaking/home-centred/outside of labour market;
2. **Focus on career** – this category was variously termed as career first/continuous uninterrupted work/work-centred/work-first/stable working/corporate/upwardly mobile/achieving; and
3. **Focus on work and family** – career and family/equal priority to work and family/adaptive reconciling family life and paid work/family balancers/life-stream/traditional/double track/accommodating/conventional (working followed by marriage).

These patterns are modified and presented in Chapter 4 (section 4.4) after analysing career pathways described by our participants. The following section discusses the effect of the above patterns on career development of women.

### 2.4.3 Effect of gendered patterns on women’s career

The prior discussion has generally established that married women are far more likely to try to combine the two roles of mother and career. The salience of the traditional women’s role as homemaker continues to permeate virtually every aspect of their career development, and as a
result, they encounter difficulties in achieving a balance. It also impacts their career adversely. It has been documented that their work is punctuated by career interruptions and characterized by pay differentials, occupational segregations and career trajectories that differ to those of men (McGregor, 2005). In a widely discussed essay, Slaughter (2012) proclaimed *Women can’t have it all* after resigning her high profile White House job in the US to be able to spend time with her family.

Research has provided several explanations as to why the proportion of women in top management has remained relatively small (Burke & Mattis, 2005). For women pursuing careers, time spent out of the labour force negatively influences occupational advancement (Brewster & Rindfuss, 2000). In the workplace, there is a presumption specific to women that they are likely to drop out of the workforce for family reasons (Rao et al., 2003). If so, this lack of continuity in employment would likely disrupt a smooth ascension to the upper levels in an organisation. Crompton and Lynette (2011) noted in their study that women tend to opt for family friendly but inferior work roles. Therefore, they fail to rise through organisational hierarchies. Women also tend to work in a narrower range of occupations than men, are more likely to work part time, are more likely than men to be multiple job holders and have a higher unemployment rate.

Domestic responsibility still remains an issue and has an impact on women’s career choices and development (Darton & Hurrell, 2005), suggesting that women’s dual roles compromise the time they can dedicate to career building. The relationship of marriage and motherhood to simple workforce participation has weakened over the past, but these factors are still strongly related to promotions, career attainment and commitment (Blair-Loy, 2009; Kirchmeyer, 2006).

Thus, the traditional gender roles have career implications for women. Research has shown that time spent on household labour negatively impacts on earnings and career success (Hersch & Stratton, 2002). It has also been documented that the advent of both marriage and children brings an increase in women’s household labour time (which is likely to have an impact on career efforts) and an increase in men’s paid work (Corrigall & Konrad, 2007).

Mothers who return to work on a part-time basis after child bearing may lose pay and seniority, and often benefits and job security as well. In contrast, women managers who had no family structure, achieved career success comparable to traditional family men (Schneer & Reitman, 2002). As a result, many women are increasingly facing a choice of either having no children or working at levels below their skills, training and aspirations (Sceats, 2003).

Gender gaps in achieved ranks and salary, common indicators of objective success, often are attributed to the different family roles and responsibilities of men and women. The impact of these family responsibilities on work has been investigated. In one study, a majority of men with non-
employed spouses experienced high productivity at work, whereas women did not seem to benefit as much with a non-employed spouse (Kirchmeyer, 2006). It has also given rise to a new phenomenon, a gender “leisure gap”. In a study of leisure outcomes, Sayer (2005) concluded that mothers’ leisure experience was of lower quality than for fathers.

Thus, the dominant corporate model of “anytime, anywhere” equates leadership with unfailing availability and total geographic mobility at all times. This roadblock is seen to be more penalizing for women, and puts men at an advantage. This “double burden” syndrome weighs heavily on women (Devillard et al., 2013). The higher the managerial position the fewer the women, as both men and women are rewarded with promotions to the top hierarchy by conforming to a model of behaviour typically characterized by masculine traits (Lehman, 1996). Gattung (2010, p. 206) admitted, “I switched off my feminine side years ago in order to get to the top in a man’s world”. The following section explains gender and work situation in New Zealand.

2.4.4 Gender and employment in New Zealand

Waring (1988), a renowned New Zealand political economist, noted in her book Counting for Nothing that “home-based work activities” including housekeeping and child care are informal work, and therefore not valued as part of economic activity, are economically unimportant and remain unacknowledged. Consequently, men and women are working just as long as each other but the majority of men’s work is paid whilst a potentially large proportion of women’s work is unpaid.

The latest Time use survey (2011) conducted by Statistics New Zealand, provides detailed information about the time people spend on paid and unpaid work, and on other activities. While 63 percent of men’s work was paid, 65 percent of women’s work was unpaid. Women spent four hours and 20 minutes daily doing unpaid work in 2009/10, whereas men spent two hours and 32 minutes a day on unpaid productive activity. When simultaneous child care is included, women spend much more time a day on all child care work than men, and thus have higher participation rates in childcare activities.

Bittman (1999) observed that almost regardless of their position in the life course, men’s weekly hours of unpaid work tend to be a fixed quantity, whereas women’s proportion varies with their responsibility for family members. The study indicated that if at all there is a decrease in women’s unpaid work, it is mainly because of ‘household outsourcing’, with regard to food preparation, childcare, and hiring other services.

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7 The first woman CEO of a publicly listed company, Telecom, New Zealand.
Even among women who are employed, a feature of their labour participation is a higher rate of underemployment. The term underemployment is understood as the workers who are employed part-time, but would prefer to work more hours. In the Household Labour Force Survey (2012), women’s labour participation was 71 per cent in the 30-39 year age group (which is a major child bearing and rearing group), but of these 63 per cent were identified as under-employed. In contrast, men in the same age group had 93 per cent participation with an underemployment of 32 per cent. Thus, for every one underemployed man there are two underemployed women, primarily because there are more than twice as many women who work part-time than men.

This is confirmed in the 2013 census, Table 2.1 provides quick stats about families and households, focussing on information about work status of mothers and fathers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2013</th>
<th>Mothers</th>
<th>Fathers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>85.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not in the labour force</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Statistics NZ (2014)

As in most places, mothers of young children have lower employment participation rates. One reason for this is the cultural norm for the mother but not the father to take time out from the work force to bring up their pre-school age children. Women’s labour force participation typically increases substantially when the youngest child reaches school age, but the average hours worked by females is always less, irrespective of the age group (Statistics NZ, 2014).

For mothers with dependent children, the age of their youngest child is a key factor in determining work patterns. The likelihood of them working full-time increases with the age of the youngest child, this proportion increases steadily from the time a child is born until they leave school. Just 15 percent of mothers with children under a year of age worked full-time. This figure increased progressively to 54 percent for mothers whose youngest child was of secondary school age (Household Labour Force Survey, 2012). With regard to the accounting sector, Whiting (2008b) reports that New Zealand Chartered Accountant mothers are primarily family-devoted and work in a part time position.

The following two reflections of New Zealand women on managing family and career, appear to be representative sentiments, which show that generally women feel that a woman progresses in life only if she has fewer family responsibilities.
As stated earlier, Theresa Gattung was the first woman CEO of a publicly listed company in New Zealand, Telecom. Theresa has often been questioned about not having children, her comment is quite telling of the prevailing state of affairs. She has been quoted as saying, “I knew I could not get to the top and have children” (Gattung, 2010, p. 237).

A participant in a Women Networking Session at New Zealand Post Group commented, "I found this session very relevant as I’m a working mother. It was extremely encouraging to know that you can still be successful in the workforce even though you have children" (emphasis added).

NCWNZ has produced a white paper entitled *Enabling Women’s Potential – the social, economic and ethical imperative* (2015) on gender inequality; it highlights that the gender stereotyping often goes unnoticed, assumed to be based on ‘natural’ differences, but nevertheless it is systematic rather than just a matter of individual attitudes. It further argues that while there have been significant changes in the lives of women in New Zealand, limiting expectations about women’s aptitude and their responsibilities inside and outside the home continue, and this results in them not achieving their full potential. For example, according to HRC Women’s Census 2010, women hold only 4 per cent of all the top executive positions on NZSX top 100 and this number seems to change very slowly. The following sections examine the situation with regard to the participants’ sectors – academia and accounting firms.

### 2.4.5 Gender and academia in New Zealand

New Zealand women outnumber men (65%) for participation at the tertiary education level (Tertiary Education, 2012), thus creating a bigger female talent pool. However, this ratio diminishes in the pyramidal structure of hierarchy as can be seen in Table 2.2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male (per cent)</th>
<th>Female (per cent)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professors</td>
<td>81.27</td>
<td>18.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate professors</td>
<td>69.54</td>
<td>30.46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: New Zealand Census of Women’s Participation (2012)

Baker (2012) identified in her research that gendered families, in which men and women are perceived to have different priorities, responsibilities, and career goals with women as primary care givers, diminished the ranks and salaries of women academics. The traditional gendered living

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8 This is a key initiative introduced by the NZ post group to address the issue of gender disproportion at senior management levels which has proved immensely beneficial for women to build a supportive network. [http://www.eotrust.org.nz/peoplepower/view_case_print.cfm?id=92](http://www.eotrust.org.nz/peoplepower/view_case_print.cfm?id=92)

9 National Council of Women of New Zealand was established in 1896 to serve women, the family and community at local, national and international level. It is an umbrella organisation with a volunteer board and 20 branches nationwide. More than 290 organisations, as well as individuals, are members.
arrangements and unequal workloads at home contribute to perpetuation of gendered career patterns.

Over recent decades, there have been fundamental changes in academic environment in universities across the world, and there are several studies that have investigated its effect, particularly on female academics. The following discussion first comments on how the environment has changed around the world, and then it explains how it has affected the academics in New Zealand.

For generations, academic identity had centred on knowledge, but there has been a growing emphasis on research productivity in recent years, which refers to the research output produced by academics and measured in the total number of publications by a researcher, usually adjusted for quality. Research findings from several countries suggest that academic work has changed, a few illustrations follow:

- **Australia** — Research studies report deteriorating working conditions for academics, especially due to extensification of e-technology which has resulted in poor work-life balance (Currie & Eveline, 2010; Langford, 2010). It was identified that management culture was the most important driver for low and decreasing academic satisfaction (Fredman & Doughney, 2012). With regard to women’s style as senior academic managers, it was observed that due to the ‘soft’ management skills, women’s contribution was not valued in a competitive management culture which strongly focused on research output (White, Carvalho, & Riordan, 2011).

- **United Kingdom** — Knights and Richards (2003) found in their study that the typical academic path is structured according to a male perception of success that is focussed on research-drive and an uninterrupted career history. This masculine approach presents disadvantages to a majority of women and it may also result in high levels of psychological distress resulting in poor work-life balance (Kinman & Jones, 2008).

- **USA** — Lanier and Tanner (1999) commenting on the gender inequity in academia noted that female accounting academicians are underrepresented in the senior ranks of the profession. Though on a positive note, Jordan, Pate and Clark (2006) presented positive findings with regard to gender imbalance. They have observed that women have made important gains in increasing their representation in the past two decades in accounting academia.

With regard to New Zealand academia, like in general career patterns, one often-cited explanation for a lower number of female applicants for promotion and subsequent lower representation at higher levels is the impact of personal life responsibilities on the time and energy required for work
commitments (Murray, Tremaine, & Fountaine, 2012). Another offered reason is a social construct—women’s “nurturing pre-disposition” may require them to undertake the student focused roles, in some cases perhaps at the expense of research focus and output (Shaw & Cassell, 2007). Furthermore, promotion and salary increases are often correlated with publications than teaching evaluations, and studies often find that women’s publications have fewer refereed publications, and they are viewed as less authoritative (Baker, 2009).

This is also because New Zealand academic environment has changed over the last decade. Prior to reforms in the 2000s, tertiary education institutions in New Zealand received funding based on equivalent full-time students adjusted by weighting for different course costs. But the recent major political and economic restructuring in the tertiary education sector in New Zealand has changed the workplace. PBRF, the performance based research fund that was established in 2002 has widely affected the way academics work. For academics seeking permanent university positions and subsequent promotions, along with teaching, activities like research outputs, contribution to the research environment, peer esteem, research funding and postgraduate completions have to be well accounted for (PBRF: A history and overview, 2012; PBRF user manual, 2014). Understandably, this has had far reaching impact on the academic environment, and has transformed the nature of academic work.

Thus, accounting academics have been placed in a more demanding and distracting teaching environment as research productivity has become a focal point for administrators in universities (Wills, Ridley, & Mitev, 2013). Currie and Vidovich (2009) argued that in particular, markets and governments have assumed greater power over academics. With regard to research projects, funding partnerships and sponsorships have challenged independence of some research. There is a broad feeling that the recent marketization has not delivered the promised freedom and flexibility, but further has led to bureaucratism and control (Fredman & Doughney, 2012). Moreover, the separation of teaching and research has created new tensions as there is a newly formed need to justify their position as academic in a tripartite role of researcher, teacher and administrator (Webster, 2010).

A source of tension is to produce research in compliance with the expectations by the management, which has considerably curtailed their academic freedom. It has been identified that academics had to reinvent themselves as researchers and this has created new identities and pressures for academics (Beck & Young, 2005). Indeed, one of the participants from this study ruefully commented that, “At the moment it feels to me like as academics, we kind of have been captured by that, administrators... it seems like we have lost some important power.”
However, the favourable points for an academic career have also been identified. Compared to accounting firms, within the demands of teaching and research, academics have some degree of autonomy in the way they organise their work and this can make it easier for them to manage personal and work commitments (Doherty & Manfredi, 2006). Many are attracted to academia through a strong need for autonomy and independence, and because of the fact that they do not have to ‘clock in’ and ‘clock out’ like in accounting firms. The ability to do what I want, when I want and how I want, is the most frequently mentioned motive for choosing an academic career (Lindholm, 2004). Indeed, ten CA participants in this research (5 male and 5 female) had shifted from accounting firms to academia for these very reasons.

Thus, the academic environment also presents opportunities and facilitates growth. For example, recognizing that women continue to be underrepresented in senior academic positions in universities (see Table 2-2), a national level “New Zealand Women in Leadership” programme was established in 2007 aimed at developing leaders within the tertiary sector. A longitudinal study by Harris and Leberman (2012) reported that this initiative has increased participant women’s self-confidence and networking skills. Since completing the programme more than half of the faculty respondents who had applied for promotion, got it. It has also been found that women who did apply for promotion (though fewer females do), were proportionately more successful (Murray et al., 2012). This reflects an improving environment for women in academia.

2.4.6 Gender and accounting firms in New Zealand

The topic of women’s lack of promotion prospects within accounting is a widely researched theme in accounting (Emery et al., 2002; Jeacle, 2011; Whiting, 2008b). The accounting profession’s concern about ‘female brain drain’ has led to a plethora of studies investigating the reasons (Wallace, 2009b). Before discussing research findings, let us first look at some important statistics. Table 2.3 presents information about the gender composition of NZICA membership over the years.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Female members (per cent)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987*</td>
<td>11.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>15.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>32.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>42.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The per cent slowly increased over the decades and reached double digits in 1987.

Source: Devonport, 2008; NZICA Annual Report, 2013
With regard to Partnership figures, women account for only 15 per cent in the ‘Big Four’ accounting firms (New Zealand Census of Women's Participation, 2012). Thus, although the percentage of women as NZICA members has increased, there has not been a corresponding change in the female partnership numbers.

Additionally, a 2012 survey by NZICA reveals the substantial difference between male and female Chartered Accountants’ (CA) remuneration. This report demonstrates the gender disparity through a large pay difference of $62,219 at the CEO level between men and women, and about $20,000 difference on an average across different levels (Remuneration & employment survey, 2012). This difference is highlighted from the outset of their careers with male CAs with five or fewer years’ experience earning $3,605 more than female CAs annually. This difference continues throughout their careers with the gap in average remuneration becoming as large as $47,315 at 16 to 20 years of experience.

The disparities have been investigated by various studies. Women lag behind because the capacity to follow the overt time-management routines is considered as a particularly important skill in career progression in accounting firms. Moreover, it has been identified that active participation in a firm’s social events receives consideration in the evaluation decision process (Anderson-Gough et al., 2001).

Further examination of gendered paths in accounting has revealed that sex discrimination is to some extent still an issue but that the major factor underlying these gendered trajectories is also that women still retain the major responsibility for domestic work (Crompton & Lyonette, 2005). The percentage of females leaving the public accounting profession is considerably higher than that of their male counterparts. They are likely to re-join after their youngest child is in school, which implies at least a 7-8 year absence from the profession. Most departures occur before age 30 or the promotion phase point for senior manager, and during their absence, they will have been removed from changes in their profession (Bernardi, 1998). Whiting (2008a) found that Chartered Accountants with the least family responsibilities are likely to be the most successful career-wise.

Thus, the foregoing discussion presented sufficient evidence to demonstrate that gender differences exist in the field of careers, however it is contended that this partially reflects women’s own attitudes and preferences (Fortin, 2005). There is a stream of research that has critically examined the other aspects of this issue.

### 2.4.7 The other side of the glass ceiling

Hakim (1991) suggested that explanations for women’s inferior position must be sought among “dispositional” factors, rather than among “situational” factors – that is, the nature of the work they
do. Thus, while analysing women’s careers, she has urged researchers and practitioners to take into account the lifestyle choices as part of free will, and not only socialization or structural influences.

Furthermore, Hakim argued that in modern societies, women’s preferences become a central determinant of life choices – in particular the choice between an emphasis on employment or family life. She presented this view as an example of preference theory, arguing that genuine choices are open to women (Hakim, 2000). She demonstrated that women choosing clear employment objectives mostly achieved their goals; women who aimed for specific occupations and acquired the necessary skills fared best in the labour market. She argued that, when women chose work as a central life goal, they achieved jobs at higher levels of status and earnings than were obtained by women for whom paid employment was a secondary or peripheral activity.

Contrasting the view of gender essentialism that differences are closely associated with physical, psychological, and/or spiritual differences, Crompton and Lyonette (2005) took an existentialist philosophy approach. Reaffirming the above perspective, they argue that humans are beings that create and define themselves in interaction with others. In particular, the feminist existentialist perspective explicitly recognizes the role of an agency in women’s choices (Wallace, 2009a). Thus, it may be argued that women make conscious choices in reaching decisions, and therefore bear responsibility for those choices.

In addition, Hakim (2004) contended that in order to have access to positions of leadership, it is imperative to give prominence to work. She concluded that women wishing to reconcile family and professional life without a strong emphasis on work will never make it to the top of the hierarchy in organisations. Other researchers have made similar observations that executive positions require an immense commitment of time, energy and emotion, and a singular focus on professional achievement.

With regard to fewer women at senior levels in the accounting sector, Bernardi (1998) observed that it is a result of their personal choice to prioritize family life at the expense of professional life. Such careers are organised by what Blair-Loy (2009) called a “schema of work devotion”. This requires single-minded allegiance and a firm grasp of one’s purpose in life. Blair-Loy further explained that women who pursue demanding, elite careers often find themselves colliding with the “family devotion schema” that defines marriage and motherhood as a woman’s primary commitment. These personal choices about lifestyles may also influence women’s decision making about career planning (Airini et al., 2010).

Thus, women’s career decisions are also partially affected by their attitudes with regard to work, which leads to their actions and choices about the labour market outcomes (Corrigall & Konrad,
For example, a multinational study of married men and women conducted in 28 countries has identified an association between egalitarian gender-role attitudes and higher individual earnings for women (Stickney & Konrad, 2007). Another study affirmed that women with more traditional attitudes are likely to focus their time and energy on family responsibilities to meet unpaid family obligations, whereas women with more egalitarian attitudes may hire household services in order to increase paid work time (Schwartz & Rubel-Lifschitz, 2009). This can have a significant impact on their career.

Seabright (2012) further claimed that there is no systematic discrimination against women; anyone who takes a career break suffers from it, and women suffer career-wise as they tend to sacrifice office time for child care and fail to send a signal of this commitment to the boss. Secondly, women are disadvantaged by networking behaviour, as each sex prefers to network with its own kind, and with fewer women at the top, networking opportunities are limited for them.

The above discussion has commented on gendered career patterns, pointing to the fact that individuals who treat career as a secondary life goal, regardless of their gender, will not progress in their careers as well as their counterparts, who give a priority to careers over personal life. However, it may not always be a voluntary choice to give preference to family/career as the socio-cultural as well as institutional beliefs and norms that primarily shape the career orientations of men and women cannot be overlooked. A key policy document by NCWNZ (2015) argues that to achieve gender equality we need to change the way we think and act towards gender issues. It recognises that some of the things that stop women from achieving their potential are ideas, attitudes and beliefs that are not enforced by law, but control what courses they study, what qualifications they seek and what jobs they apply for.

Thus, gender and career has been discussed in depth, as one of the main emphases of this research. The present research project upholds the view of De Beauvoir (1949), who posited that men and women must find reciprocity. Women, she argued, should not take up power against men; no one should try to reduce the other to the status of an object, which would not be ideal.

It has been identified that there has been a paradigm shift in the way people view career success. In seeking answer to Research Questions 6, this research intends to explore the phenomenon of personal success, which is elaborated below.

### 2.5. Career progression and personal success

A central issue in careers research and theory has been the nature of success. Benko and Weisberg (2007) asserted that scaling the corporate ladder has been the enduring gold standard for personal success since organisational hierarchy was invented two centuries ago. Several researchers have
observed that, traditionally career progression was referred to as the position one held in the organisation or advancement in the organisational hierarchy (Almer, Lightbody, & Single, 2012; Dolton, Makepeace, & Marcenaro-Gutierrez, 2005; Morley, Bellamy, Jackson, & O’Neill, 2002; Windsor & Auyeung, 2006). Consequently, career success was seen as rising through these organisational hierarchies (Crompton & Lyonette, 2005), and was generally measured by salary and position on the authority ladder (Heslin, 2005).

However, changes in the way that work is organised has resulted in new concepts about careers that are qualitatively different from the concepts that had prevailed through much of the 20th century (Herr, 2001). Particularly over the past few decades, the essence of career has changed. Dessler and Varkkey (2011) pointed out that not too long ago people viewed careers as a sort of upward staircase; now it is observed that employees more often reinvent themselves for fulfilment and balanced lives, by navigating the career track. It is recognized that people are increasingly more concerned with the multiple issues of personal and professional development, job satisfaction, work-life balance, and personal well-being (Rudman, 2010).

In fact, influential theorists have long acknowledged the importance of being able to experience meaning in work in order to achieve optimal human functioning (Frankl, 1978). Researchers have further focussed on the importance of meaningful work (Chalofsky, 2010; May, Gilson, & Harter, 2004), as meaning making facilitates positive attitudes to change as well as it enhances the motivation to engage when situations change. This has also been found to result in more work engagement and enhanced performance (Van den, Demerouti, Bakker, & Schaufeli, 2010). However, it seems that people still struggle with this. For example, in a study of career planning of older persons, Hansen (2001) found that many people at a later stage in life begin to ponder the big questions of spirituality, meaning and purpose; questions that include connectedness and wholeness.

What Kofodimos (1993) observed a few decades ago, applies today as well. She stated that it is difficult to recognise or address the profound questions of meaning in our day-to-day existence given the speed at which our daily lives take place, and the conditions under which we work, all of which often detach us from what is meaningful. To manage this issue, McKenna (1997) advised that until we redefine success more broadly to include balance and meaning in our lives, we will stay stuck in careers that ask us to weigh one artificially divided world against another. This suggests that we must be ready and able to switch from the accepted system of recognizable success to something more individually rewarding.

Researchers have developed different views of looking at the meaning of “success”. For example, Hall (1996) termed it as psychological success – the feeling of pride and personal accomplishment
that comes from one’s significant achievements in life, be it family happiness, inner peace or something else. It has also been viewed as the accumulated positive work and psychological outcomes resulting from one’s work experiences (Seibert & Kraimer, 2001). Las Heras (2009, as cited in Hall & Heras, 2010) has developed a construct of preferred success set (PSS), which refers to all conscious and subconscious goals a person chooses for his or her daily career undertakings. This concept has five dimensions – the work itself, the rewards they expect to obtain from it, the relationships that it facilitates, the impact it has on others, and its interplay of individual’s work with other life spheres.

It has been proposed that most careerists formulate their own cognitive map of what constitutes career success, and it can vary considerably with regard to work and life (Derr, 1986), which can be understood by subjective wellbeing – people’s own evaluations of their lives. It is suggested that the external indicators cannot capture what it means to have a subjective sense that one’s life is good, as people evaluate conditions differently, depending on their expectations, values, and previous experiences (Francis & Hills, 2008; OECD, 2012). Further, it is identified that personal well-being is founded on the purposeful activities of people acting individually or in collaboration with others (Dalziel & Saunders, 2014).

Thus, though career progression was generally measured by success in work performance in terms of promotions and pay-rise, there is a group of researchers who propose that it does not necessarily mean hierarchical movement (Adamson et al., 1998), and that career success is no longer necessarily defined by upward advancement or extrinsic rewards (Heslin, 2005). Although objective criteria have dominated much of the career success literature, subjective criteria have increasingly been adopted in the 21st century (Greenhaus, Collins, & Shaw, 2003; Hall, 2004). Moreover, it has also been recognised that objective and subjective success are positively correlated (Judge, Cable, Boudreau, & Bretz, 1995). Therefore, researchers need to operationalise career success by measuring objective indicators – salary and promotion, as well as, subjective indicators – subjective judgements about career attainment, job/career satisfaction (Ng, Eby, Sorensen, & Feldman, 2005; OECD, 2012).

Gender being one of the main foci of this study, it is important to understand what women think of personal success. Powell and Mainiero (1992) identified that achieving high ranks and earning high salaries represent traditionally male criteria for defining success and may not be valued as strongly by women. Several researchers affirm that women choose the kind of career that enables them to be successful on their own terms, to find their balance, and they are less driven by objective measures of career success such as money, status and promotion (Fortin, 2005; Heslin, 2005; Inceoglu, Segers, Bartram, & Vloeberghs, 2009).
Sen (1999) noted that the well-being aspect and the agency aspect of women’s movements inevitably have a substantial intersection. Mainly because, the role of women’s agency seriously afflicts the lives of all people – men as well as women, children as well as adults. Sen further pointed out that empirical work has brought out very clearly how the relational aspect and regard for women’s well-being is strongly influenced by women’s ability to earn an independent income and participants in decision-making within and outside the family. Therefore, Sen concluded that independence and empowerment are positive contributors in adding force to women’s voice and agency.

Pratt and Ashforth (2003) maintained that meaningfulness – the amount of significance something holds for an individual – has become a central concept and it comes from the creation of worth in and/or with work, colleagues and the organisation. Meaning in life is being associated more strongly with individual differences in personality, in terms of individual’s personal values and attitudes that might underlie their experience of a meaning in life (Francis & Hills, 2008). The above discussion suggests that while the number of ways of achieving objective success are finite and dependent more on the external factors, the number of ways of achieving psychological success are infinite and internal (Hall & Richter, 1990), and they depend on individuals. The ultimate goal is possibly striking a happy medium through balance and moderation (Zerubavel, 1991).

This new emphasis on life-work balance encourages individuals to define their careers subjectively, in ways that make sense to them. It emphasises voluntary choice and deliberate action on the part of the individuals to suit their respective life goals. As a result, career success is lesser symbolised by a ladder, but rather by a lattice (Benko & Weisberg, 2007). Recognizing this as an important outcome of career decisions, this thesis proposes to address and understand these imminent issues through a dialogue with the research participants. Based on the above discussion, this construct is conceptualised as “personal success”, since the emphasis will be on the participants’ concept of success, and is based on two main constructs: life satisfaction and work-life balance.

2.5.1 Life satisfaction

The cognitive component to well-being can be called as “life satisfaction”, wherein people evaluate how well they are doing in life (Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2008). Though this feeling is likely to fluctuate, the belief is that individuals always try to achieve a certain level of satisfaction and maintain it. Dawis (2002) has rightly identified that satisfaction depends on perception, it occurs only when an individual perceives a need as being fulfilled. This is a very important premise of career crafting. This research acknowledges that an individual’s perception is closer to “his/her” reality than the actual norm or the researcher’s interpretation of it. Therefore, rather than reinterpret or place
alternative meaning on our participants’ experiences, the perception of the participant as his/her “reality” is accepted.

Life satisfaction includes the satisfaction felt by the participants in their personal and work life, and thus, job satisfaction is an integral part of life satisfaction. Researchers and practitioners are finding new means to define and manage these complex phenomena. Fox (1994) suggested that there are essentially two kinds of work, which he labelled inner and outer. Inner work refers to that world within our souls or selves, and outer is the way we interact with things outside ourselves. Changes in the workplace, the advancement of technologies and their increased application to the work environment have resulted in change in the nature of work. Fox further proposed that a third kind of work – that of bringing the inner and outer together – is required. The present study is sensitive to this approach.

Current research on job satisfaction and life cycle theory suggests that some people leave firms because their employer cannot offer them enough stimulating change nor the flexibility to incorporate their personal goals into their work (Macky & Boxall, 2008). For example, many women leave their positions because their jobs are boring, their chances of advancement are low, and the company requires unreasonable working hours (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2006).

Thus, organisations also play a key role in managing satisfaction. Parker (2007) advised that vocational interventions should assist individuals to reflect about their “key goods”. These may include ideals of self-realisation, social justice, equality of respect, caring for others etc., in order to resolve problems that may arise as individuals build their lives. Related research presents a more holistic view in which social, intellectual, physical, spiritual, and emotional factors are woven into work to attain self-fulfilment and betterment of society (Baruch, 2004; Hansen, 2001; Pringle & McCulloch Dixon, 2003).

### 2.5.2 Work-life balance

The tensions between the demands of the labour market and the absolute human need for caring and nurturing have always existed, but these have historically been solved by women taking the primary family responsibility. As women started entering the workforce to a greater degree, during the 1960s and 1970s, these tensions came to be labelled the problem of work-life balance (Crompton & Lyonette, 2005). Employers considered work-life balance mainly as an issue for working mothers who struggled with the often conflicting demands of their jobs and raising children. This essentially treated work-life balance as a peripheral issue. But by the 1990s, it solidified into a vital, central issue for many (Bird, 2006).
The main reason for this change in view is that many people find it difficult to manage meaning in their lives as they are getting increasingly busy. It is observed that they might not be gaining increases in their emotional well-being, commensurate with their increased busyness (Robinson, 2006), or with increase in income (Kahneman & Deaton, 2010). Bartolome and Evans (1980) indicated in their research that those who were objectively successful in their careers in terms of salary and progression, might experience the “career success-personal failure” effect. Certainly, it is accepted that work should not completely crowd out the other things that matter to people; and things like time with family, participation in community activities, voluntary work, personal development, leisure and recreation contribute to a rich and full life. Employee views and experiences have changed markedly with regard to what constitutes a good life. For example, a focus on centrality of work-family activities and their interactions can contribute to achieving a balance between the two; gaining that balance is becoming a salient motivator in people’s reflections about their competencies and aspirations.

More importantly, in recent years increasingly sophisticated communications technology has enabled near constant contact with the workplace. As a result, work “extensification” has invaded home lives, intruded into people’s private lives and has weakened the boundaries between work and home. This has intensified the nature of work by extending it into more spaces, which has created still more tension (Currie & Eveline, 2011). Currie and Eveline further commented that having e-technologies at home is of benefit to work but may come at a cost to the family life, delivering both a blessing and a curse.

Accordingly, competing demands between work and home have assumed increased relevance for employees in recent years (Beauregard & Henry, 2009). The concept of work-life balance, integrates career decisions centring on the individual and accentuates the need for a very well-targeted, personal, and easily comprehensible approach (Hildebrandt & Littig, 2006). Kirchmeyer (2000, p. 81) viewed living a balanced life as “achieving satisfying experiences in all life domains. To do so requires personal resources such as energy, time, and commitment to be well distributed across domains”. Likewise, Clark (2000, p. 751) defined balance as satisfaction and good functioning at work and at home, with a minimum of role conflict.

Thus, work-life balance for any one person is having the "right" combination of participation in paid work, and time for other aspects of their life. It is about people feeling satisfied with the way they divide their time and energy between paid work and all the other things they need and want to do (Work-life project, 2008). It has been acknowledged that the optimal work-life balance changes for each individual over time; for some it may mean more work, whereas for others, less (Bird, 2006; Work-life balance, 2005).
Nippet-Eng (1996, 2010) found that some individuals would disconnect the two domains by keeping separate calendars/keys. Commenting on how people balance borders through different tactics, Kreiner, Hollensbe and Sheep (2009) have classified these into four types – Behavioural, temporal, physical, and communicative. Cohen, Duberley and Musson (2009) viewed home and work realms not as reified entities but rather as elastic constructions. These are where emotions, as well as issues of economy, control and identity, are integral features helping to restore and maintain work-life balance, thus emphasising the active, adaptive nature of contemporary life.

Duarte argued that the new conceptions of work life recognize that career belongs to the person not the organisation (2004, as cited in Savickas et al., 2009). The new career path is not a pact with the organisation; it is an agreement with one’s self and one’s work. The path to the top has been replaced by the path with a heart, suggested Hall (1996). This has given rise to the corporate lattice model which explains career path as an undulating journey of climbs, lateral moves and planned descents, and that allows people to climb upward via paths that are more fluid and adaptive (Benko & Weisman, 2007). All these approaches emphasise the central role played by an individual to suit his or her own choices, in order to balance personal and professional commitments. This is the principal theme of career crafting, and is investigated though the textual analysis of participants’ inputs.

2.6. **Main constructs of the proposed career crafting approach**

The central concept of career crafting is based on the job crafting idea that careers (jobs) can be developed in an intentional manner if individuals make it a conscious process and thereby positive changes can be proactively made by them. While it is agreed that the external constructs are not entirely within the control of the individual, it is proposed that the individual response to and action on the changes can be managed to a certain extent. This study is interested in knowing how people build capabilities and develop their possible selves, with an especial focus on the process of forming career identity and developing career orientation for desired outcomes.

The earlier discussion in this chapter has elaborated and expanded the main components of job crafting model – cognitive, task and relational crafting – to suit the purpose of this research. The above principal pillars are expanded, and the external influences of family, organisation and environment, and the concept of personal success are included in the proposed approach of career crafting. Thus, this project emphasises the following concepts.

1. **Role of individuals in career crafting**
   a. **Cognitive Crafting (CC)** – altering view of career encompassing personal and professional life, self-awareness, defining and redefining career goals and positions, and adapting to change;
b. Task Crafting (TC) – altering number, scope and type of tasks in personal and professional spheres to attain goals; proactively undertaking tasks, developing competencies; and

c. Relational Crafting (RC) – altering the quality, amount and nature of interactions at work and in personal life, role of important others.

2. Role of family: family of orientation – emotional and financial support, early vocational development, influence on career pathway choices; role of family of procreation with a special focus on the role of a spouse, as family responsibilities and support have been recognised as main influences on the career trajectories of individuals.

3. Organisation: school – role of teachers, subjects studied; workplace – work design, degree of variety and challenge in the job, flexibility facilitating work-life balance, autonomy, and conducive corporate culture.

4. Environment: external influences such as social, cultural, political, legal, technological, natural, and global factors. Though these are largely beyond individual control, career crafting focuses on the individual response to the changes in environment.

5. Personal success: measured in terms of individuals’ perception of success – objective and subjective success, personal and professional development, personal well-being, happiness, work-life balance, and job and life satisfaction.

The above construct is synthesised with the findings of Chapter 4 after analysing the career pathways of the participants, and the enhanced construct is presented as a paradigm of career crafting in Chapter 5.

2.7. Conclusion

The above discussion has built a strong theoretical framework for this study. First, it presented the overview of different approaches to career development, influencing factors, and resultant career patterns, especially with regard to gender, and commented on the concept of personal success. As the discussion revealed, these questions are not new, yet there are no easy nor complete answers. They have been addressed by different studies, but the very fact that we are still beleaguered by the issues of life satisfaction and career development inspire us to explore further.

This study acknowledges the view of careers as a moving phenomenon and as the combination and sequence of roles played by a person during the course of a lifetime. The career development process depends largely on the capability of an individual to make appropriate work choices, taking into account the complexity of family, organisational and environmental factors. Thus, while
capturing the agentic spirit of individuals in career decisions, it is understood that an individual’s career choices do not reside completely within the person. The external factors play a vital role in the shaping of career pathways, either by offering support and thereby facilitating growth or by creating and imposing constraints.

Gender and the redefinition of gender-based roles add new dimensions to the analysis of these career decisions, and the discussion above demonstrated that distinctive patterns exist as a result of social processes. However, it has been established that individual attitudes and goals also influence this process to a large extent. While gender differences are socially embedded and culturally rooted, there is a visible shift in the career patterns of men and women. Research also presents the other side of the glass ceiling, wherein it is claimed that women chart their career pathways mainly through their perception of their roles and the behaviours that comprise them, which affect their attitudes and resultant behaviours.

The above discussion highlighted the main and important questions about the outcomes of career decisions – why do people work, what motivates and guides their decision-making with regard to exploration, growth and change, and how do they define success? These are especially salient questions, given the rapid pace of the far-reaching changes that have taken place over the past few decades and the paradigm shift in the personal and work spheres. Taking into account influence of these factors, the proposed construct of career crafting, is intended to incorporate the main components.

The following chapter elaborates on the research approach in order to test the new paradigm of career crafting and why qualitative study was thought to be the most appropriate for the enquiry. It describes in detail the method proposed for data collection and analysis.
Chapter 3

Testing the Career Crafting Paradigm

3.1. Introduction

The literature review presented in the previous chapter has facilitated identifying and shaping several building blocks and determining lines of inquiry to advance the research project for a theoretical contribution. The word theory stems from a Greek word “theoria”\(^\text{10}\) meaning contemplation, viewing, looking at. Deutsch and Krauss (1965) described theory as the net a person weaves to catch the world of observations to explain, predict and influence it. In agreement with this view that ideas are important and data from the world must be transformed into effective notions if there is to be a significant scientific yield, this research focuses on two central inquiries:

1. The role of career crafting in achieving personal success; and
2. Gender, career development, and career crafting

This chapter introduces the research approach taken, outlines the research plan in terms of the process of data collection, and elaborates on how conversations with the participants are interpreted in the light of the textual analysis. It then establishes the framework for the analysis in terms of the systematic approach taken to theme development and explains the reasons for the use of the software NVivo. It concludes by discussing data coding, the process of arriving at the final nodal structure, and the steps taken to ensure the validity of the analysis.

3.2. Research approach

Generally, a research inquiry process is undertaken with an expectation that it may result in confirming contemporary knowledge, elaborating on that knowledge, or generating new knowledge. Creswell (2003) maintained that knowledge is both individually and socially constructed from among many possible truths. Rallis and Rossman (2012) further recognized that all knowledge is limited, partial, and socially and historically situated, emerging from a complex mix of socialisation and experience which makes it a challenging process. This has important implications for designing a research approach (Benz & Newman, 2008).

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Research approaches are mainly categorised into three groups (Creswell, 2003; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Rallis & Rossman, 2012; Ritchie, Lewis, & Elam, 2003; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003), described below:

a) Quantitatively oriented research interested in numerical analyses
b) Qualitatively oriented research primarily interested in analysis of narrative data
c) Mixed methods research: Several developments over the past few decades have added this new dimension to the hitherto main two approaches – qualitative and quantitative. In this approach, more than one method or more than one worldview is used to conduct research.

Rallis and Rossman (2012) have illustrated these research approaches through a continuum given below. At one extreme anchor point is the qualitative side, with interpretivist assumptions that present reality as socially constructed and laden with multiple meanings, and is accomplished through direct personal experience and interpretation. At the other extreme, is the quantitative side with objectivist assumptions that posit reality to be for the most part independent of social actors and is fact based.

![Figure 3-1 Qualitative-quantitative continuum](source: Rallis & Rossman, 2012)

The above continuum presents research approaches not just into two categories, but provides flexibility in terms of combining the main two qualitative and quantitative research as interactive places on the continuum. This view is supported by Benz and Newman (2008), who proposed that the two approaches are neither mutually exclusive nor interchangeable; and are operational at different points in time. Inductive research is required in the exploratory phase of any research project, and deductive research is required in the confirmatory stage.

Similarly, Bernard and Ryan (2010) argued that real research should never be purely inductive or purely deductive. They further offered that the paradigm of building knowledge – the continual combination of inductive and deductive research – is used by scholars across the humanities and sciences alike and has proved useful. Likewise, this view is upheld by other researchers that although the reasoning is largely inductive, both inductive and deductive processes are at work, and the activities of collecting, analysing and writing up data are simultaneous (Marshall & Rossman, 2010; Patton, 2002; Silverman, 2006).
In order to achieve methodological congruence in a research study, the challenge is to appropriately match the research approach to purposes, questions and issues (Richards & Morse, 2012). Consequently, the choice of methods is largely determined by whether the intent is to specify the type of information to be collected in advance of the study or to allow it to emerge from the participants in the project. Since the later objective aligns with this research, the study was situated on the qualitative side of the continuum to best explore the meaning of the phenomenon of career crafting. In-depth interviews were utilised for collecting data.

The following section discusses in detail the rationale for the qualitative approach by comparing it with the quantitative research, outlines its various characteristics and the fit with the study’s objective. Appendix B draws on Jennings (2010) to set out the main differences between the two approaches.

### 3.2.1 Qualitative research

Denzin and Lincoln (2008) maintained that quantitative studies emphasise the measurement and analysis of causal relationships between variables, rather than processes. In contrast, the word “qualitative” implies an emphasis on the qualities of entities or processes and meanings that are not or cannot be experimentally examined or measured in terms of quantity, amount, intensity, or frequency (Ritchie, Spencer, & O'Connor, 2003). They are investigated for the potential they may have for the research purpose.

Quantitative studies are often claimed to do a good job of demonstrating a connection between two variables, but have less to contribute to the understanding of what process or mechanism was responsible that influenced the outcome (Remler & Van Ryzin, 2011). In contrast, Liamputtong and Ezzy (2005) claimed that qualitative research captures lived experiences of the social world and the meanings people give these experiences from their own perspectives. This is precisely the sort of information this study utilises. For example, in this study the career decisions taken by the participants are explored and the resultant outcomes are analysed on the basis of their “reported” experiences.

The quantitative research approach was not chosen as it is unlikely to be sensitive to the contexts of experience by turning participants and their responses to stimuli into numbers (Denzin, Lincoln, & Giardina, 2006). It has also been argued that the human phenomena cannot maintain their essential and embedded features if reduced or measured as in quantitative research (Ajaw & Higgs, 2007). Such an approach excludes the stakeholders from dialogue and active participation in the research process. This weakens its democratic and dialogical dimensions because of the passive participation of the respondents, and returns all power to researchers (Howe, 2004). In contrast, qualitative
researchers tend to build a collaborative, reciprocal, trusting, mutually accountable relationship with those studied. For example, in this study the transcripts were returned to the participants after the interviews for their comments, and analysis was done after getting their approval of their verbatim account of the textual data.

Additionally, the qualitative approach was judged to be more appropriate for building a thorough and detailed description of this new phenomenon of career crafting. The origin of the word phenomenon can be found in the Greek word *phainesthai*, to show itself, to flare up, to appear. Hence, the interpretive paradigm – one focused on the emergence and meaning of behaviours – was viewed as the most suitable because of its potential to generate new understandings of the complex and multidimensional phenomena that contribute to and define career planning.

Researchers have recognised that qualitative research methods facilitate a rich or dense description of the phenomenon being investigated in a particular context (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Van Manen, 1990). Those practising qualitative research have been inclined to place emphasis and value on the human, interpretive aspects of knowing about the social world and the significance of the investigator’s own interpretations and understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Ritchie et al., 2003). This is a very important feature of qualitative research that fits with this researcher’s personal experience of career crafting and the objective of understanding this phenomenon further by relating it to, and examining it in the light of, the experiences of others.

The choice of the approach was also supported by the seminal article on job crafting by Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001, p. 197); they stated, “… a better way to study job crafting may involve [investigating] how people see their work and themselves in their work, and such matters are not often easily reduced to survey items.”

This research is about studying career decisions and outcomes; the career literature acknowledges that the complexities of the interactions that occur within and among the intrapersonal traits and interpersonal interactions, are simply too complicated to understand. Therefore, the constructivist approach recommended that study of career choice and development should be done on an individual basis (Brown, 2002). Moreover, the factors that may contribute to the career progression of individuals under study are likely to be complex and will differ according to individual circumstances. Individuals have subjective preferences and desires; people want different things with different intensities, and it is not possible to quantitatively compare the intention among different people (Ellig & Thatchenkery, 1996).

Creswell (2013) has identified five main approaches to qualitative research, viz., narrative research (based on the stories from a single individual or a small number), phenomenology (exploration of a
phenomenon with a group of individuals to describe the essence of the experience), grounded theory (development of a new theory to explain a process grounded in the data from participants), ethnography research (interpretation of shared experiences) and case study (exploring a real-life system involving multiple sources of information). This research combines the phenomenological approach and grounded theory as it aims to explore the phenomenon of career crafting based on lived experiences of participants, and it aims to develop the career crafting model based on the analysis of participants’ inputs.

Thus, based on the above discussion and the nature of this study, the qualitative approach was clearly the most advantageous, and was therefore adopted. In particular, the following six characteristics of qualitative research are appealing and significant, justifying the approach.

**Emergent**
The emergent nature of qualitative research recognizes that questions may change and be refined as the inquirer learns more about what to ask. Creswell (2003) elaborated on the process – the researcher collects open-ended emerging data with the primary intent of developing a general pattern of understanding that may develop as he/she begins to develop initial codes, which are then further developed into broad themes. This is particularly useful since the phenomenon of career crafting is emergent rather than tightly prefigured. Several unique aspects of the phenomenon may thus emerge during qualitative study. In a broad sense, qualitative research provides the drive for experience and for generating new knowledge.

The qualitative approach is thereby suitable for this exploratory study because the data collection methods (interviews) facilitated close contact between the researcher and the participants. These interactions were developmental, and allowed for emergent issues to be explored during the interviews. Additionally, analysis was open to emerging concepts and ideas which may produce detailed description and classification, identify patterns of association, and develop explanations (Ritchie et al., 2003), all of which are appropriate to achieve the overarching goal of the study to examine the impact of career crafting on career pathways of accounting professionals.

**Interpretive**
The qualitative research is fundamentally interpretive as the qualitative methods have grown out of a constructivist philosophy. This orientation emphasises that humans construct knowledge out of their engagement with the world (Caelli, Ray, & Mill, 2008). Further, Bloomberg and Volpe (2012) maintained that constructivist researchers recognize and acknowledge that their own background shapes their interpretation, and they thus “position” themselves in the research and acknowledge their cultural, social and historical experiences. As per this paradigm, subjectivity is valued because humans are incapable of total objectivity as they are situated in a reality constructed by their
subjective experiences (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007). This is particularly important here as the researcher has a personal experience of the concept of career crafting.

According to Ritchie et al. (2003), the key elements of a qualitative study are the outputs which tend to focus on the interpretation of meaning through mapping and “re-presenting” the social world of research participants. It is a naturalistic, interpretive approach concerned with understanding the meanings which people attach to phenomena within their social worlds (Ritchie et al., 2003; Snape & Spencer, 2003). This aligns with Weick’s (2002) concept of “real-time reflexivity”; life is lived forwards but understood backwards, which is just as true for researchers as reflexive observers, as it is for the people we observe.

Thus, the qualitative research paradigm relies on inter-subjectivity, the notion that interpretation allows us to see the world from the participant’s perspective and the language, providing a unique window into the thoughts, experiences, and motivations of others (Remler & Van Ryzin, 2011). The present study focuses on understanding the career decisions and the changes people make to the subsequent pathways, linking it with the concept of career crafting in order to examine its impact. That is, the interpretive nature of qualitative research is utilised to investigate the past career decisions from the view of the participants, looking at it through the career crafting lens.

Holistic
The interrelatedness of different aspects of people’s lives in taking career decisions is an important focus of this research. The qualitative approach recognizes the major part played by psychological, social, historical, and cultural factors in shaping people’s understandings of their world (Snape & Spencer, 2003). It has been observed that individuals are not absolute agents, and life experiences and circumstances can significantly affect the degree to which an individual can freely make their initial job choice and any subsequent career decisions (Duffy & Dik, 2009). It is proposed that the phenomenon of career crafting can be understood by a careful examination of how respondents think these have resulted in changes in their behaviour and on why these have occurred.

Qualitative researchers view social phenomena holistically, which is a particular focus of the present effort. Patton (2002) maintained that qualitative research represents human beings as whole persons living in dynamic, complex social arrangements, and the whole phenomenon is studied in its complexity. Career decisions such as those investigated here are clearly multi-faceted, comprehensive, complicated, and intricate. The more interactive and encompassing the narrative, the better and richer the data and more relevant the conclusions taken from the interviews will be. As outlined before, this research has stemmed from this very idea of encompassing the different aspects of life in taking career decisions, focusing on the work and the non-work aspects; it therefore relates to the holistic nature of qualitative research.
Exploratory
One of the main objectives of this research was to explore the process of how people form career pathways. It was, therefore, clearly advantageous to rely on a dialogue with the participants to develop a deeper understanding of this phenomenon, rather than a quantitative method such as a non-interactive, online questionnaire. This is particularly so since the factors that may contribute to career pathways are likely to be complex and are likely to differ according to individual circumstances. A powerful way of understanding how they are formed is to listen to the voices of research participants as they talk about their experiences, so that these complexities can be unravelled, and their journey be understood (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). This approach focuses on exploration that emphasises discovery, description and meaning, characteristics that Laverty (2003) has identified as critical to deeper understanding of phenomena.

Indeed, Bernard and Ryan (2010) have argued that the way people actually experience events is always exploratory, and preliminary understanding of the phenomenon is best done inductively. This is an exploratory study to examine the presence and impact of the newly proposed concept of career crafting in relation to the career decisions taken by the participants, and thus the study is based on this feature of qualitative research – the interpretive understanding of participants’ construction of events that defined their career decisions.

Collaborative
It has been proposed that the qualitative researchers understand that life occurs in context and therefore they work in the field, face to face with real people (Rossman & Rallis, 2011). They seek depth rather than breadth. For reasons noted above questions of how and why people make career decisions requires this depth-oriented approach. This mode of research involves active engagement by the participants, and sensitivity to their perceptions about life and work. Thus, qualitative researchers look for involvement of the participants in data collection and seek to build rapport and credibility with the individuals in the study.

Subjectivity and inter-subjectivity
Kahneman and Deaton (2010) defined “life evaluation” as a person’s thoughts about how his or her life has progressed over time. How the world appears to us is a subjective experience. Dawis (2002) argued that “subjective” reality lies in the awareness of the person, and it consists of an “inner world” that is accessible only to the person. Whereas the objective reality lies in an “outer world” that is accessible to the other persons to a degree, for example, to a researcher, and both “worlds” form the foundation for reality. It is this interactive reality that provides the context for the career decisions investigated here.
Thus, people generally have a fair understanding of a “balance” in their life, which can only be defined by the individual for himself/herself, and possibly unravelled through a meaningful dialogue with them. Moreover, these processes are contextually bound; what is useful, meaningful and relevant depends on the individual and what he or she makes of the situation. For example, this study links career crafting practices with personal success; it does not question the understanding and perception of personal success of the participants. Rather, it accepts their judgment and bases the exploration on the verbatim account.

Moreover, qualitative researchers strive to understand the experience of the participants, essentially gained from the awareness of participants to their circumstances. Husserl argued that understanding of experience is the fundamental source of knowledge. In his view, “pairing is the way in which I experience someone else, my existence and the other’s existence are co-present intentional communion” (1977, as cited in Moustakas, 1994, p.37). This feature is particularly appealing to this research, as it utilises interviews with the participants to understand their experiences to examine the phenomenon of career crafting. Thus, the “pairing” is intentional and necessary – selection of the participants for the interviews through purposive sampling (discussed in section 3.5.1); and it is anticipated that “communion” (the association) with the researcher will lead to a meaningful dialogue in terms of the research purpose.

3.3. Establishing rigour in qualitative research

It is important to emphasise that research evidence, whether quantitative or qualitative, cannot serve for judging as it can never supply complete information. This is because research findings are always interpreted by examination of the evidence, and interpretation is never free from potential error. Hammersley (2005) maintained that research relies on judgment and interpretation, and it can never be governed, but only guided by, methodological rules. Rallis and Rossman (2012) further maintained that a systematic qualitative inquiry should include elements of science (e.g. planning, deliberation, systematizing), and of art (e.g. curiosity, imagination, and emotion).

Qualitative research is often criticised for lacking the rigour that quantitative approaches appear to incorporate into a research study. This appears to be because, historically – reliability, validity, objectivity and generalisability – were viewed as the standards against which research was judged; and qualitative research cannot satisfy this criteria set in their narrowly interpreted quantitative sense (Marshall & Rossman, 2010). However, it has been observed that over the past few decades texts have moved away from using the above terms (Jennings, 2010) and the rigour criterion has been challenged owing to multiple assumptions about the nature of truth, reality, knowledge claims, and evidence (Rallis & Rossman, 2012).
Several researchers have asserted that an alternative vocabulary can be used with regard to qualitative research processes and findings, defining criteria for quality in terms of the worth of the topic, sincerity of the informants, meaningful coherence across the data, ethical practice, authenticity, credibility, transferability, dependability, rich vigour, and confirmability (Charmaz, 2006; Denzin et al., 2006; Tracy, 2010). These characteristics have been incorporated into the methodological focus in the present study. Thus, in order to validate and to ensure the value and appropriateness of the research method, this research paid attention to the following six points.

1. **Scientific study**

   Generally, the qualitative approach commences with description based to a large extent upon the reported perceptions of persons in their everyday setting and attempts to interpret and explain the reported behaviour. This method is often criticised for being “descriptive”, and therefore “unscientific”. Argyris (1996), however, argued that science is fundamentally descriptive and by this also explanatory. This argument is that research, whether qualitative or quantitative, constitutes a process through which a scientific body of knowledge is accumulated. For example, it is anticipated that the careful description of the forming of career pathways, and subsequent analysis of it for examining the phenomenon of career crafting, will add to the understanding of the concept and add to the literature on career development.

   Tomkins and Groves (1983) argued that qualitative research must raise the scientific level of analysis through identification of concepts and the establishment of substantive theories. Furthermore, as Rallis and Rossman (2012) suggested, this study achieved it by employing a methodical approach to collecting data, with sound reasoning, systematic planning of the research, and logical and organised analysis of the evidence.

2. **Generalizability**

   Researchers typically obtain data from samples and seldom study an entire population. In quantitative research designs, the fundamental assumption is that generalisation is best achieved by using random samples and emphasising statistical methods. In comparison, qualitative research is often criticised for its lack of ability to generalize findings to larger populations as they usually deal with small samples (Fairweather & Rinne, 2012). However, it must be realized that in qualitative research designs, typically done with non-random samples, the views about generalisation are varied.

   Argyris (1996) advised that the generalisations should inform the users not only what is likely to happen under the specified conditions, but more importantly how to create the conditions and actions. Otherwise, generalisations are not actionable. Williams (2000) argued that generalisation in qualitative research is desirable and inevitable, but there are limits to its generalising possibilities. He
further suggested that interpretivist researchers can use “moderatum” generalisations which are not meant to hold true over long time periods or across cultures. As a result, these generalisations can only be moderate, and therefore may be treated as theoretical inferences and form the basis of theories about processes or structure.

Moreover, qualitative designs typically aim for analytical generalizability, which is comparable in its power although different in aim from the generalizability of quantitative research, trading off breadth for depth (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). As suggested by Bloomberg and Volpe (2012), the goal of qualitative research is not generalizability, but transferability – emphasising how (if at all) and in what ways understanding and knowledge [in this case, of career crafting] can be applied in similar contexts and settings. This research ascertains the conditions under which career crafting takes place, to identify and understand its impact on career outcomes. The aim is also to draw general characteristics of crafters and document the different crafting practices so that these findings may be transferred to other settings.

3. Validity

Lewis and Ritchie (2003) stated that validity means “well grounded” or “correct” which adds to the strength of the data. They maintained that tests or measures of reliability and validity as used in quantitative sciences are inappropriate for qualitative investigation. Therefore, they suggested that validity in qualitative research can be regarded as fitting into two categories:

a) Internal validity

This addresses issues of sample coverage, capture of the phenomena, labelling, interpretation, and true presentation of the findings. Triangulation has been suggested by several researchers as one of the ways to establish internal validity (Creswell, 2003; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Jonsen & Jehn, 2009; Patton, 2002; Rallis & Rossman, 2012; Thurmond, 2001). This can be accomplished in multiple ways. One such is to examine the interpretation of the data by different sources to deepen and confirm the understanding, and also to substantiate researcher’s findings across sources (Schensul, 2012).

In this study, triangulation was used to fulfil the “communicative validity” criterion of validation suggested by Kvale and Brinksmann (2009), wherein interpretation of a given finding is open for discussion and refutation by persons other than the researcher. The effort is concerned with establishing the quality of research with regard to the interpretations and claims made on the basis of that understanding. Thus, as argued via the above discussion, triangulation was utilised to validate the coding of data in the initial stages to ensure the communicative validity (discussed in detail in section 3.7.7).
b) External validity
This is achieved via respondent validation, whereby the findings are taken back to the respondents for confirmation (Gobo, 2008). This re-visiting of respondents is a critical component of the current project. This was achieved in two ways: firstly by sending the transcripts to the respondents who were asked to make changes if any, to conform to their understanding in order to validate the interview data (section 3.6.5); and secondly by discussing the summary of findings with a few participants (section 5.7). Thereby, their contribution in the research process was acknowledged.

4. Credibility
In order to establish credibility, the researcher is expected to develop a coherent and logical argument and use evidence to support it in order to build trustworthiness. It is the relevant communities such as the respondents and peers that hold the key to credibility. Given that scientific knowledge is a social construct, peer review becomes a useful way to establish credibility by validating research claims (Rallis & Rossmann, 2012).

Moreover, this study observed the four credibility criteria described by Caelli et al. (2008). Those criteria are: (1) the theoretical positioning of the researcher, (2) congruence between methodology and methods, (3) identification of the strategies to establish rigour, and (4) a detailed description of the analytic lens through which data are examined. These criteria is explained with reference to this research in the relevant sections of this chapter.

Traditionally, in contrast to qualitative materials, quantitative measures are preferred because they are deemed to be more transparent and more objective (Hammersley, 2005). Denzin et al. (2006) question these criteria by asking “transparent to whom?” As discussed above, it is understood that it is important that the research method be transparent to both participants and other scholars in order to fulfil the criteria of reliability, validity and credibility. Following the suggestions by Rallis and Rossman (2012), this was achieved through putting forward the reasoning and detailing the analytical process.

5. Causality
Causality is primarily linked to the use of quantitative methodology, which deals with the linear relationship between two or more variables (Jennings, 2010). It is often argued that the qualitative research methods cannot by themselves be used to establish causal relationships or explanations as experiments are not conducted (Maxwell, 2004).

Primarily, the backbone of good scientific thinking is comparison, and to achieve that in qualitative research, Schwartz and Ogilvy (1979, as cited in Jennings, 2010) proposed a different type of causality; mutual causality. This form of causality recognizes the concurrent interactive influences
between phenomena and/or people, wherein cause and effect are interwoven. Schwartz and Ogilvy stressed that such causality is better studied through the use of a qualitative method, as it enables such multiple and complex interactions to be studied simultaneously.

The present study uses the comparative method to find the commonalities between individuals who practice career crafting and the effect on career outcomes – phenomena which reflect just these sorts of “multiple and complex” interactions. However, this study is aware that two or more things that are alike in some important ways may yet differ in others. Therefore, an attempt will also be made to identify the common patterns as well as the respective differences in the career outcomes, and thereby establish associations with career crafting.

6. **Reliability**

According to Lewis and Ritchie (2003) in the broadest conception, *reliability* means “sustainable” and “replicable”. However, Marshall and Rossman (1999) claimed that in qualitative research, given its dynamic nature, replicability is arguably an artificial goal. Seale (1999) supported this artificiality view as he saw the expectation of complete replication as “a somewhat unrealistic demand”. He also recommended that good practice can be achieved through adding a requirement of reflectivity wherein claims must be supported by sufficient evidence. Supplementing that view, Jennings (2010) suggested that to increase reliability, the researchers must ensure that the processes used for empirical data collection and interpretation are consistent and trustworthy, and are authentic to fit the context and nature of the data collected.

3.4. **Positioning of the researcher**

It is evident from the above discussion that the role of the researcher is pivotal in a qualitative research project. Qualitative research in general does not claim to be objective; it is in fact carried out by researchers who bring their subjective values and invest meaning into their endeavours (King & Horrocks, 2010). He or she can and should be fully involved and interested in the research process and open to what may appear. As per the nature of qualitative research, mindfulness is a virtue (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998), researcher subjectivity is prized, and inter-subjectivity is embraced (Moustakas, 1994). Emphasising the above views, this very subjectivity was treated as a resource that can be developed in ways that may augment and intensify this research. Such subjectivity will allow for a deeper understanding of the process of career crafting, interpreted through the accounts of the study’s participants.

As researchers, our knowledge of the world is always mediated and interpreted from a particular stance, and it is important that it is recognized and embraced in explicit ways. The debate has indeed shifted from minimising subjectivity to thinking more about how to bring oneself into the research
process (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Thus, the notion of researchers as neutral observers has been challenged and rejected by qualitative researchers (Caelli et al., 2008). It has also been acknowledged that researchers usually have a personal history related to the study they want to pursue and that they should not strive to be wholly detached from their research (Cousin, 2010). In particular, when a researcher has personal experience relevant to the purpose of their study, their role as a primary data collection instrument necessitates the identification of their own values, biases and assumptions (Miller, 1991, as cited in Creswell, 2003). In the present study, the researcher is aware of such implications because of her personal experience of career crafting.

Thus, the above discussion recognises that the self is the main research tool, and thus immediately connected to the methods of data collection through collaboration with the participants and analysis through empathetic interpretation. In order to achieve this, Blumer (1980) advised that the qualitative researcher needs to adopt a more naturalistic mode of enquiry. During the process, the investigator has to guide herself by exploring ideas, practices and outcomes as presented by informants, and carefully analyse associations between the different career factors identified by the process, in this case with regard to career decisions of accounting professionals.

Denzin and Lincoln (2008) viewed the qualitative investigator and those investigated as interactively linked in a process of the creation of findings, with the investigator as a passionate participant. The biases and assumptions of the researcher are not set aside, but rather embedded and recognised as essential to interpretive process. Insight and understanding are seen as resulting from the process of co-creation between the researcher and participant, in which the very production of meaning occurs through a circle of interactions, reflective writing and interpretations (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, Denzin et al., 2006).

Moreover, the interpretive paradigm of qualitative research considers the world to be constituted of multiple realities, and therefore an inductive approach is needed to develop a fitting explanation of the range of relevant phenomena (Jennings, 2010). This is particularly so, as the researcher has to understand a phenomenon through her participants’ experiences. As advised by Creswell and Clark (2007), the researcher is mindful about the way in which her personal understanding can be introduced into the study and usefully incorporated in the analysis.

Thus, it is particularly important in exploratory research that a high order of careful and honest probing is conducted, with resourcefulness and flexibility in the study in order to expand and deepen the researcher’s perception (Blumer, 1969). In the context of career crafting, “careful and honest” probing may mean asking uncomfortable questions reflecting on past decisions. It is therefore a heavy responsibility for the researcher to report the findings in a logical yet sensitive and confidential manner as the participant allows her to probe into his or her personal world. It is expected that the
researcher’s personal experience of career crafting may enhance the understanding of the context, and the awareness, knowledge and identification of the phenomenon in the participants’ accounts.

Marshall and Rossman (2010) advised that the following three interrelated concerns should be addressed for a research study based on qualitative approach.

1. **Should-Do-Ability** (contribution to theory and research): In their research on job crafting, Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001) focussed on the job related aspects and alterations to it for better functioning at a workplace. However, the personal aspect has not been covered by job crafting research to this point in time. It is the position of this researcher that job and personal life cannot be segregated while studying the work outcomes of the process. Therefore to fill this gap, it was hypothesised that this concept could be extended to careers to include the series of career decisions and also to include the personal life domain.

2. **Do-Ability** (feasibility): The aim was to co-create the data by interacting with a select group of accounting professionals in New Zealand, tracing their career pathways. The very fact that they are working at a higher level in the organisation, be it academia or accounting firms, indicated a series of career decisions that has led them to their present position. It was thought that they would be willing to participate in the study and share their experiences which plausibly would help explore the linkages between career crafting and career trajectory.

3. **Want-To-Do-Ability** (energy and interest of the researcher): The researcher has previously examined career crafting to study her career progression and has experienced benefits in terms of personal and professional life. It was assumed that the knowledge gained out of personal experience would accentuate the design and application of effort to the present research study. The passion and interest in the topic would also lead to a high level of involvement in the research process, and the researcher’s ability to establish rapport and use empathetic communication skills would lead to co-creation of valuable knowledge through the interactions.

The discussion above has presented the foundation for this qualitative study. It has explained why the qualitative research paradigm is a preferred fit with regard to the objectives of this study and has described the considerations to maintain academic rigour throughout the research process. The following sections explain in detail how the research plan for data collection and analysis was formulated and carried out to attain the research objectives.
3.5. Research plan

3.5.1 Sampling

The principle of qualitative sampling used in this study can be termed as “symbolic representation”\(^\text{11}\) because in qualitative research samples are small in scale and are chosen to both “represent” and “symbolise” features of relevance to the investigation. For this study, the purposive sampling method was chosen for precisely what the name suggests; members of the sample were selected with the “purpose” of representing a type in relation to three key criteria (see below), who could illuminate and inform the understanding of career crafting. Moreover, purposive sampling was chosen because its logic and power is derived from the emphasis on in-depth understanding rather than empirical generalisations (Patton, 2002). Thus, this sampling method would lead to information-rich cases for study in depth that in turn would provide a great deal of data about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research.

The purposive sample of Chartered Accountants in mainstream accounting firms and academia provided the means to investigate a specialized population of accounting professionals in New Zealand. It was felt that a particular professional path requires prerequisites like a certain type of qualifications (for example, a commerce degree or equivalent), preparation (qualifying exams, practical mentored experience), and membership to the appropriate institute (in this case, NZICA – the New Zealand Institute of Chartered Accountants). Thus, people belonging to the same profession would present a homogenous nature which would minimize the within-group differences to a certain extent. As Ibarra (2003) experienced in her study of professionals, it should be expected that they would be willing to talk about their career path having made a long-term investment of time, energy, and education in that direction.

In order to optimise the chances of identifying the full range of factors or features that are associated with the phenomenon, it is recommended that the purposive samples are selected on the basis of salient criteria as they are small in scale (Ritchie et al., 2003). As advised by Jennings (2010), it was determined who or what study units would be the most appropriate for inclusion in the study based on the closeness of fit to criteria associated with the focus. It was also important to make sure that the sample was as diverse as possible within the boundaries of the defined accounting professional population (Ritchie et al., 2003). The following three criteria were adopted while approaching and selecting the prospective participants.

\(^{11}\) This term has been adapted here from Hays & Minichiello (2005), they used it to describe music as a symbol for defining their participants’ own sense of self and identity.
- **Type of organisation and position** – People working in mainstream accounting firms or academia, and their position in the organisation were the main factors, which naturally governed that they would have a career pathway to talk about after having completed the qualifications and several years of required experience. Further, as their working lives were still in progress, it would be likely that there were still choices to be made for the future. This allowed the researcher to explore how they conceptualised their future career, and the drivers for the decisions that might lead them there.

- **Gender** – The second most important variable was gender (surface level variable), as gendered career patterns is the main focus of the study. As mentioned earlier, an equal distribution of gender facilitated comparison within the sample.

- **Regional location** – Participants from four major cities in New Zealand, two from North Island (Auckland and Wellington), and two from South Island (Dunedin and Christchurch), were contacted to attain a diverse coverage of the country.

Qualitative research employs several methods for collecting empirical materials. There is no single, accepted way of doing qualitative research; indeed how researchers carry it out depends upon a range of factors. As an overarching category, it covers a wide range of approaches and techniques in the research discipline (Snape & Spencer, 2003). These methods include – case study, personal experience, introspection, life story, interview, artefacts, cultural texts, observational, historical, interactional, visual texts, etc. (Creswell, 2003; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Jennings, 2010; Ritchie et al., 2003). The aim of the study was to gain a better and deeper understanding of the subject matter by choosing the most suitable method, and in-depth interviewing was chosen as a primary method of data collection.

In qualitative research, the number of respondents is less important, as the richness of the data is valued more. Generally, qualitative studies using interview method contain around forty respondents (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005; Ritchie et al., 2003). Therefore, it was planned to collect data from about 40 respondents; as the interviews progressed the number was capped at 36, involving an exact balance of gender with 18 male and 18 female participants. The sample being small (36), it is not claimed to be representative of the New Zealand accounting professional population as a whole. However, it displayed enough homogeneity for patterned regularities to be identified in the forming of career pathways in the accounting field.

### 3.5.2 Interviewing

As one of the most popular forms of data collection in qualitative research, the interview is described as a construction site of knowledge. According to Kvale (1997), an interview is literally an “inter-
view”, an interchange of views between two persons. This also raises the concerns over how a researcher understands or represents another person’s ‘world view’ (Riach, 2009). But by using interviews the researcher can reach areas of reality that would otherwise remain inaccessible such as people’s subjective experiences and attitudes (Marshall & Rossman, 1999; Peräkylä, 2008). It leads to the creation of a collaborative effort; the key is the “active” nature of this process that leads to a contextually bound and mutually created story (Fontana & Frey, 2008).

In particular, in-depth interviewing is a meaning making endeavour embarked on as a partnership between the interviewer and the respondent, with a key feature being the ability to provide an undiluted focus on the individual (Legard, Keegan, & Ward, 2003). Interviews provide an opportunity for detailed investigation of people’s personal perspectives, for in-depth understanding of the personal context within which the research phenomena are located. It requires active asking and listening. Riach (2009) advised that the heart of the qualitative interview requires much reflexivity, which is sensitivity to the important situational dynamics between the researcher and the researched that can impact on the creation of knowledge.

Interviews consist of accounts shared by the participants with the researcher about the issues in which he or she is interested. Thus, since interviewing can be issue-oriented, this method was useful for the researcher, who had a particular topic of career crafting that she wanted to focus on.

**The caveats**

Interviews are narrative accounts rather than a true picture of reality, in the sense that the texts are produced, shared and used in socially organised ways (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Moreover, the spoken word may have a residue of ambiguity (Peräkylä, 2008). The researcher was aware of these caveats even though the questions were carefully worded and the answers were reported back to the participants for verification.

Additionally, the researcher was aware that the study was based on a single snapshot of participants’ thoughts and feelings since the interview data were collected at one point in time, i.e. in one interview. There was a possibility that this might have left out the obscure but important factors involved in how this complex, dynamic and longitudinal process of career development unfolded over time (Berg et al., 2010). The researcher was also conscious that interviewing is not merely the neutral exchange of asking questions and getting answers; and it may carry unavoidable conscious and unconscious motives, desires, feelings, and biases (Fontana & Frey, 2008).

Construction of knowledge in research interviews is a key context for determining the validity of inter-view-produced knowledge. As cautioned by Kvale (1997), the researcher was aware that the
key stages of an interview inquiry – interviewing, transcribing, interpreting and validating – if not taken care of, may turn some interview interpretations into houses built on sand.

Thus, taking into account the above points, this study planned to conduct semi-structured, in-depth interviews. The semi-structured nature of the interview ensured that each interview covered substantially the same topics (Remler & Van Ryzin, 2011), but the researcher did not have to follow a standardized script. In addition, this facilitated a better flow and provided nuances by giving more freedom to the participant to share his/her thoughts on the topic while keeping the conversation on track; a detailed explanation follows.

**Interview protocol**

Semi-structured interviews follow interview protocols or guides to ensure that the same basic lines of inquiry are pursued with each person interviewed. These interview guides essentially list issues that are to be explored in the course of an interview (Patton, 2002). They provide the broad topics or subject areas within which the researcher is free to explore, probe and ask questions that will elucidate and illuminate a particular subject.

Thus, the researcher in this study was free to build a conversation within the particular area of career development, to word questions spontaneously, and to establish a conversational style but with the focus on a particular subject that had been predetermined. It also allowed respondents some latitude and freedom to talk about what was of interest to them, thus allowing the conversation to flow more naturally, exploring new topics that were relevant to the interview (Riach, 2009). The main elements of interviews – cognitive processes of comprehension, retrieval of information, judgement and estimation, and reporting an answer – were taken into account while formulating the guiding questions (Groves et al., 2004).

Since the main focus was on career crafting, the questions were used to explore the concept further (see Appendix D). However, this being an exploratory study no mention of career crafting was made, but instead the focus was on finding out about activities (which would tell us about task crafting), managing relationships (relational crafting), and conceptualisation of career and life goals (cognitive crafting).

### 3.5.3 Ethical conduct of the research

After the research proposal was presented and approved by the Faculty, it was important to obtain human ethics approval at the university. Qualitative researchers face particularly complex ethical issues because their research involves personal interactions with participants (Mertens, 2012), and also because this interaction may be in the form of a sustained and intensive experience with participants (Creswell, 2003).
Particularly the interview method poses certain ethical challenges as interviews are interventions; they affect people. The exercise of being taken through a directed, reflexive process affects the persons being interviewed and leaves them knowing things about themselves that they did not know or at least were not fully aware (Patton, 2002). For example, with regard to this research, about an hour of thoughtfully reflecting on one’s career history can rewind the happy incidents and sense of achievement but may also stir negative emotions like regret, frustration, etc. Moreover, publishing of that information in the form of research findings can also make people feel vulnerable (although pseudonyms are used to maintain anonymity). Thus, it was of utmost importance to maintain high ethical standards in order to honour their participation, wherein they shared a relevant and important part of their life, and invested their precious time in the research activity.

Ethical considerations raised by qualitative research are mainly concerned with obtaining consent and maintaining participant anonymity and confidentiality of the data (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007). Because of the human participation, an approval for this research was sought from the Human Ethics Committee at Lincoln University before commencement of data collection or contacting the participants in any way. As a requirement of the approval process, research information sheet and a consent letter were prepared as explained below.

**Research information sheet**

The information sheet was carefully prepared which indicated the expectations on the part of the researcher as well as the participants; it was detailed enough so that participants were informed about the specific nature of their participation and contribution to the project goals. All prospective participants were provided with the information sheet (see Appendix E) detailing the aim of the research, the contact details of members of the research team, how the data would be collected and used, what participation would be required of them, their time commitment, where the interview would be conducted, the anonymity and confidentiality of the information, an opportunity to withdraw from the research within a stipulated period, and a chance to view the transcripts and provide comments.

No mention of “career crafting” was made in the information sheet (or for that matter subsequently in the interviews) as career crafting was explored as a new concept and the aim was to ascertain its presence and impact on career decisions and outcomes. The information sheets were emailed to participants along with the request for the interview, and in addition a physical copy was made available at the time of the interview. Participants were given opportunities to ask questions and were informed that they could withdraw from participating at any time during the interview, and up until two weeks after receiving the transcripts for their comments.
Informed consent
Written consent was obtained from each participant prior to the commencement of the interview (see Appendix F). It clearly marked that their agreement to participate was completely voluntary. Consent was also sought for recording the interview, or for note taking if they did not wish the interview to be recorded. It explicitly stated that the transcript of the interview would be shown to them for an approval, and that they could withdraw from the research up to two weeks after receiving the interview transcript.

Anonymity and confidentiality
Maintaining anonymity and confidentiality is often a major concern where participants reveal personal and professional information. Anonymity means a commitment that the identity of those taking part would not be revealed outside of the research team and confidentiality means avoiding attribution of comments, in thesis and presentations, to identified participants (Lewis & Ritchie, 2003). These issues also have implications for data storage. Pseudonyms were used in the research reporting, and the specific details such as location, the name of the organisation have not been revealed in reporting the information.

3.6. Data collection
The data collection plan was implemented after formal approval was received from the Human Ethics Committee for this research on 26th March, 2013. Two types of data were collected for this research, primarily qualitative in terms of the interviews, and quantitative in the form of demographic and professional information through the data sheet (see Appendix C). As the key feature of qualitative research, the data collection method was planned to be interactive and developmental, and it allowed for emergent issues to be explored.

The focus was on Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, and Dunedin, the four major cities in New Zealand. The researcher searched the websites of the mainstream firms and the universities in those cities for the contact details of prospective participants; this information was easily available on the websites. As explained previously, the main criteria for sampling was the type of organisation (accounting firms or academia), gender and regional location. This was easier to observe in terms of creating a list of the prospective participants.

3.6.1 Scheduling appointments
Data were collected from April 2013 to August 2013. Prospective participants were contacted by electronic mail appraising the research objectives along with the research information sheet. The invitation provided the potential participants with an overview of the project and time and
commitment requirements on their part. Typical format of the email was as below; this one was for the Wellington sample:

I am undertaking doctoral research at Lincoln University on career progression of accounting professionals in NZ. Actually this is my second PhD, the first one is from India in Human Resource Management.

It would be a privilege to interview you at your convenience, with respect to your career progression as an accounting professional. The interview may take about 45 minutes, and it will be at a time and place convenient to you. I do understand the demands on your time, but I can assure you based on my past experience that it will be a mutually rewarding experience.

I will be in Wellington for the research interviews in the second week of June (10th to 16th), and it’d be great if we could meet at your convenience. I have got interviews planned on Wednesday, any other day is fine. Please see attached the research sheet for your information.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

In all, 99 prospective participants were contacted from these four cities. Those who responded favourably were contacted for their time preferences for interviews to match the researcher’s interview schedule, keeping in mind the time and budget constraints. Consequently, the interviews were set up with 36 respondents who replied in the affirmative and whose time preferences could be accommodated in the interview schedules. Though not aimed for, the sample was racially homogenous, consisting of people of European descent. Tables presenting information on the personal and professional factors are attached in Appendices I and J.

Generally an hour was estimated for the interview, and a gap of two hours was planned in between two interviews if they were held at the same place. This allowed for interviews which might take more than an hour (some did continue for about one and a half hour) and it also facilitated the researcher in assimilating the information and preparing for the next interview. For interviews conducted at different locations, usually a good three hour gap was planned taking into account the time for travelling and settling in the new atmosphere.

After the initial contact, the prospective participants were again emailed primary information about the project through a written information sheet and their level of participation through a consent form. It was conveyed to them that the interview needed to be recorded for better capture of information and that it would be done only with their consent.
3.6.2 Regional description of the sample

The 36 participants who contributed to the study were recruited from the following four main cities:

- Wellington (June 2013): 5
- Auckland (July 2013): 5
- Dunedin (April and August 2013): 11
- Christchurch (May, June and July 2013): 15

The first round of interviews in Wellington happened in June 2013, and then the earthquakes in July and August 2013 caused uncertainty in planning further interviews. Auckland was found to be relatively difficult to arrange the interviews because of the busy schedules of the participants, and it was not time efficient and cost effective to match their time preferences with the interview schedules. A majority of the academics who were contacted were on leave, on sabbaticals, or were out of the country for international conferences.

Hence, it was decided to contact more people from Christchurch and Dunedin to make up for lower numbers in Auckland and Wellington. As the interviews progressed, it was also realised that the geographic location did not matter greatly, as a majority of the participants had shifted several times, and the focus of the enquiry was on how they crafted their lives to attain personal success.

Furthermore, as the project is based in Christchurch, it was logistically easier to schedule interviews to meet the convenience of the participants. Budget permitted that two trips could be made to Dunedin to cover the targeted sample.

3.6.3 The venue

The physical space can have a strong influence on an interview. The choice of the venue was left to the participants, and all of them chose to be interviewed at their workplaces. As a result, they had more control over the environment which provided physical and psychological comfort to them, and more importantly this saved their time. This was especially crucial for accounting practitioners as every six minutes of their time is otherwise recorded.

The participants, being mature professionals, were aware of the requirements of the venue – it was private, quiet and comfortable. The arrangements made by the participants in the accounting firms were usually in a conference room which ensured privacy and where they were not distracted by work matters; the academics usually arranged the interviews in their offices.
3.6.4 The interviews

The in-depth interviews used a life history approach (Hays & Minichiello, 2005), to obtain an account of the person’s career progression and experiences. At the beginning of the interview, participants were asked to fill in the details in the data sheet, while we discussed those items simultaneously. It helped in breaking the ice, in understanding their background, and also set the scene for the interview. The data primarily related to professional details to get an overview of the career pathway, and some demographic details were also collected like age, marital and parental status.

Legard et al. (2003) maintained that the researcher has a vital role to play in the interview method; the main task being to ease the interviewee down from every day, social level to a deeper level at which both people can together focus on a specific topic. In particular, it is important to make the most of the opportunity of the interaction by enabling the interviewee to talk about their thoughts, feelings, views, and experiences in the agreed time. The concept of “co-present intentional communion” discussed earlier (section 3.3.1) is apt here in the sense that it was a personal interaction between the researcher and participant where both were present, it was pre-planned, and the aim of the association was to collaborate in order to co-create new knowledge useful for the research. The participants had a brief idea about the nature of the research and the mutual exchanges were not rehearsed conversations, it was a natural flow of information spontaneously created through a guided probe.

King and Horrocks (2010) strongly recommend to have a full record of interviews to better capture the information. All the interviews were recorded (except one, as the participant did not want it to be recorded) with the consent of the participants. This also allowed the researcher to devote full attention to the conversation. It was also found to be a more neutral and less intrusive way of recording the conversation (Legard et al., 2003), which avoided unintended cues that might be given while note-taking, like the researcher fervently taking down the notes when they hear what they consider is an important point, or allowing the participants to feel enough had been said if the researcher was not taking detailed notes.

Usually people react to being recorded, so standard practice was to keep the recorder away, out of sight as far as possible so it was not a part of the immediate environment; however at the same time taking care that it properly captured the voice data. I also particularly emphasised maintaining the confidentiality of their participation and explained how it was going to be achieved.

As stated earlier, the preliminary data sheet helped to open up the topics, and the first question usually asked was – what was your career goal/dream when you were in high school? Interviews would flow from there; keeping the conversation on the track was not too difficult using the
interview protocol as a guide. Two types of questions recommended by Rubin and Rubin (2005), were used, the content mapping questions— designed to open up the interview territory, and the content mining questions— to explore the details which lie within each dimension, to access the meaning it holds for the interviewee, and to generate an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon.

The interviews were mainly based on probe questions, aiming to understand the ‘how’ and ‘why’ of the life experiences relating to career trajectory, the possibility of the use of career crafting (without the mention of it as this being an exploratory study I wanted to examine its presence, if any), and its impact on professional and personal life. I was particularly interested in the participants’ accounts of events, their responses to and interpretations of those events, and how they negotiated with the changes to create their respective career pathway. The interviews planned to place career progression as the focus of the conversation, and therefore asked questions which reflected on the decisions participants had taken which paved their career pathways. I utilised the following probes suggested by Rubin and Rubin (2005) that helped in steering the interview in the right direction,

- Clarification (seeking explanation);
- Completion (to complete the story); and
- Elaboration (encouraging the participant to keep talking in order to gather more information).

Before ending the interview the participants were always asked for their comments or questions. And then the interview ended, thanking them once again for their time and contribution, and reassuring them about confidentiality and use of interview data.

3.6.5 Transcription

Several researchers have outlined the benefits of transcribing the interviews personally as a way of familiarisation of the data. It is also recognized as the first step in data analysis (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005), as transcribing of the interviews by the researcher offers an opportunity to immerse in the data, and a chance to feel the cumulative data as a whole (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). It engages the researcher in the process of deep listening, analysis and interpretation; it also provides a valuable opportunity to actively engage with his or her research material, an opportunity to connect with the data in a grounded manner (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). Indeed, in consideration of the above points, transcribing the interviews personally helped this researcher absorb the data for comprehending it.

Transcripts differ in their precision. The most precise gets down exactly what was said, including grammatical errors, digressions, abrupt changes of focus, exclamations and other indications of
mood such as laughter or sadness or bodily gestures such as a shrug (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Paralinguistic features will naturally be present on the recording, and incorporating them is just a matter of being clear about when and how they should be included in the transcript (King & Horrocks, 2010). One more caveat for researchers is they are tempted to correct ‘errors’ as they are concerned not to make the participant appear inarticulate (Poland, 2002); however it must be borne in mind that it is not the purpose of transcription to produce a corrected version of what people have said, but rather an accurate one (King & Horrocks, 2010).

Bearing the above points in mind, the transcriptions were prepared as soon as possible after the interviews. This gave an opportunity to reflect on my own technique as an interviewer and also to develop my interviewing skills.

Initially, I was faced with a dilemma – would I transcribe all types of data I collected including laughter, pauses, and emotions such as frustration or sadness, non-verbal data such as hand gestures? I prepared the first two transcripts with the um’s and ah’s, emotions, laughter, pauses etc.; when I sent them to the participants for their review, they approved them but seemed rather uncomfortable about those “details” [the um’s and ah’s look different on paper]. For the succeeding transcriptions, I decided to retain only the words, as the aim was to arrive at a transcript, adequate for task at hand (Gobo, 2008). Moreover, this study is not undertaking a content analysis where all the contents of the interaction were important from the analysis point of view.

Transcribing can be laborious and the researcher not being a New Zealander, understanding the different accents and slang words/phrases was challenging at times. However, the benefits clearly outweighed the toil. It was a highly rewarding experience as it helped me re-live the interviews through rewinding the moments, facilitated me to absorb the data, and also helped me in preparing for the next interviews. Confidentially was also required and personal transcription by the researcher was the best way to maintain it.

As stated earlier, out of the 36 participants, one participant did not wish the interview to be recorded, hence notes were taken during the interview to record the information, and immediately after the interview I wrote down the summary. The transcription was prepared on the basis of this, and it was sent to the participant for the approval. According to the participant’s instructions, no quotes or identifying information is used in the presentation, and the findings are presented in the aggregate. All the other recorded interviews (35) were transcribed and sent to the participants for their review and comments to ensure that their intent was correctly represented. This also achieved the purpose of respondent validation (section 3.3). After getting a confirmation from them,

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12 Wherein the text units are interpreted semantically and/or syntactically (Jennings, 2010)
pseudonyms were generated for the 35 participants to ensure their anonymity in reporting of the information.

### 3.7. Qualitative data analysis

The interview analysis is the process of moving from the raw interviews to evidence based interpretations. It is acknowledged that qualitative “raw” data of verbatim transcripts of interviews are highly rich in detail, but unwieldy and intertwined in content (Ritchie et al., 2003). Moreover, qualitative research, especially interview method, produces a lot of data – many hours of recordings, resulting in a few hundred pages of transcription seems a daunting task to make sense out of it. For example, this research generated 478 pages of transcribed text amounting to about 170,000 words. In dealing with such voluminous data, organised steps to manage the data are essential. Thus, a challenge throughout the qualitative data analysis is to reduce the volume of information, to identify significant patterns and to construct a meaningful and workable framework for communicating the data (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). Spencer, Ritchie and O’Connor (2003) supported this view that analysis is a challenging, and yet exciting stage of any research, and they expounded it into two main phases – managing the data and making sense of the evidence through a descriptive or explanatory account. This requires a mix of creativity and systematic searching, a blend of inspiration and diligent detection.

Patton (2002) elaborated that data interpretation and analysis involve making sense out of what people have said, looking for patterns, putting together what is said in one place with what is said in another place, and integrating what different people have said. Creswell (2003) has elucidated this further, saying that systematic data analysis involves getting deeper and deeper into understanding the data, representing the data, and making an interpretation of the larger meaning of the data. It is an ongoing process involving continual reflection about the data. Likewise, Richards (2005) proposed that the qualitative research works up from the textual data. The interpretation involves not only explaining the findings but also attaching significance to particular statements.

Thus, in qualitative research, making sense is an undertaking. Spencer et al. (2003) maintained that the qualitative data analysis entails classifying, comparing, weighing, and combining material from interviews to extract the meaning and implications, to reveal patterns, or to stitch together descriptions of events into a coherent narrative. However, as Wolcott (1994) underlined, interpretation may not be derived from rigorous, carefully specified procedures, but it is rather based on our efforts at sense-making, a human activity that includes intuition, past experience and emotion. The interpretation invites the reflection, the pondering, of data in terms of what people have experienced, and making sense of it so it can be utilised for the study.
The exploratory nature of the research may lead to ideas emerging from working with the data, but we do not know in advance what may be learned from the data. As a result, the logic of qualitative research is concerned with in-depth understanding. With the intention of achieving this understanding, the comments made during the interviews needed to be broken down into data units, to examine blocks of information that were together (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Accordingly, part of the analysis for this research involved combining these data units on the same topic, within single interviews and across the entire set of interviews. In working out what caused an event to occur, in this case career crafting, the aim was to examine and weigh the data units where they had talked about the occurrence to combine the material into a coherent whole, as the focus is on the “process” or the “meanings” individuals attribute to their past experiences and future career goals.

Qualitative analysis is a challenge also because; there is no clear and accepted single set of conventions for the analysis and interpretation of qualitative data (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). In many cases, qualitative researchers who use written texts as their materials do not try to follow any predefined protocol in executing their analysis, they learn by doing. As Peräkylä (2008) suggested, they use an informal approach, and by reading and rereading their empirical materials they try to pin down their key themes. Thus, a common procedure is the identification of key themes, concepts or categories based on the understanding of the researcher.

However, as Blumer (1969) has noted, it is not a simple matter of approaching a given area and looking at it. The identification of themes requires a high order of careful and honest probing, creative yet disciplined imagination, resourcefulness and flexibility in study, pondering over what one is finding and a constant readiness to cast and recast one’s images of the area. Lewis and Ritchie (2003) further suggested that it is rather the content or ‘map’ of the range of views, experiences, outcomes or other phenomena, and the factors and circumstances that shape and influence them, that can be inferred from the research population.

The main aim of a qualitative study is to analyse the data systematically for finding patterns in the data, for ideas that help explain why those patterns are there, and about how properties of things are related to one another. To achieve this, aligning the meanings is a way to search for common clusters or themes, a movement from individual description to aggregate description, as the most important lessons lie in similarities across stories (Cochran, 1990).

On the other hand, comparison is also another important feature of research design that aids theory building and enhances the solidity of research findings. Bechhofer and Paterson (2012) argued that comparison and control is central to research design, and a good research design is judged by the way these issues are addressed, and which permits meaningful and insightful comparisons. In
principle, making the right comparisons and being reasonably sure that the conclusions drawn are sound, seems an obvious goal of research, which was achieved by asking the following questions:

1. What things are we comparing?
2. What attributes of these units are we using to make the comparison?
3. How will we measure similarities and differences on each of the attributes?

Thus, interviews were analysed in terms of these intertextual relationships, tracing the dimensions of similarity and differences, keeping in mind that interviews make sense in relationship with other interviews (Atkinson & Coffey, 2011). To conclude, the value of qualitative research is in understanding rather than measuring difference (Lewis, 2003), and the aim was to develop the understanding of the practice of career crafting by:

- Identifying the absence or presence of career crafting in the accounts of different groups;
- Exploring how the manifestations of career crafting vary between and within groups; and
- Exploring the reasons for, or explanations of crafting practices, or their different impacts and consequences on career outcomes.

### 3.7.1 Use of NVivo

As discussed above, one of the challenges of voluminous qualitative data is how to categorise and manage the data for achieving the research purpose. NVivo is a computer assisted data analysis software that helps to organise non-numerical data. It aids to label or ‘tag’ passages of text that can be later retrieved according to the codes applied. Initial reservations about any use of computers in qualitative data analysis have largely been disappeared, as it has been recognized that computer-assisted analysis software does not obviate the crucial role of the researcher (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). In fact, no tools of analysis can replace the conceptual skills of the researchers, but they simply facilitate the analytic process (Spencer et al., 2003).

It has been established that software analytical packages are essentially a tool that can make the numerous tasks of the analytic process efficient and are certainly useful in assembling and locating information (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). It also helps in quickly tracing useful quotations and multiple perspectives on a theme (Creswell, 2003). For that reason, it was decided to use NVivo for theme management, and it indeed proved to be an efficient assistant in handling the data. Thus, NVivo was not used as a substitute for analysis, but it was an alternative to manual sorting.

When examining material to summarise, I moved through the data systematically to ensure that all the content had been considered. With the help of NVivo, I was able to synthesise the data across all cases and all themes. Specifically, it facilitated going back to the transcripts and checking the
highlighted portion to confirm that the data had been categorised appropriately and also that the transcripts of 36 participants had been properly covered.

### 3.7.2 Thematic analysis

As the first step of the textual data analysis, Ritchie et al. (2003) recommended familiarisation, which makes identifying themes easier. Though it may seem an obvious step, it is a crucial activity at the start of the analysis. As stated earlier, since I had transcribed the interviews, I felt totally immersed in the data, and so familiarisation was relatively easy.

As the next step, thematic analysis involved systematic coding and extracting of information from the transcripts rather than looking for confirmation of the researcher’s initial ideas. To understand what a theme is, it is important to refer to Boyatzis (1998) who explained it as a pattern found in the information that at the minimum describes and organises possible observations, or at the maximum interprets aspects of the phenomenon. In other words, it is a valid, accessible approximation to the complete interview. It helps in systematic data exploration and reduction of the huge data by grouping the material into similar themes (Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

Consideration of the following questions suggested by Boyatzis (1998, p. 31) facilitated a systematic identification and categorization of the themes as explained in the following sections:

1. What am I going to call it/label it?
2. How am I defining it?
3. How am I going to recognize it in the interviews?
4. What do I want to exclude?
5. What is an example?

Furthermore, Bernard and Ryan (2010) maintained that in qualitative research, themes come both from primary data (an inductive approach) and from our prior theoretical understanding of the phenomenon under study (a deductive approach). Priori themes come from characteristics of the phenomenon being studied, from the literature review, from theoretical orientations, and from personal experiences. For example, prior discussion (section 2.4) established that career progression of men and women is shaped differently, and there are various factors that contribute to this phenomenon. Therefore, one significant theme was to understand the forming of the career pathways with respect to gender. On the other hand, the interview responses led to emergence of themes out of the interaction with the participants. For example, career clarity emerged as a theme out of the primary data analysis. The nodal structure presented in Appendix G, highlights these themes to indicate their type, namely, priori (P) and emerged (E).
3.7.3 Coding

Codes are used for marking instances of themes in a set of data, by which they show where the themes identified actually occur in a text. Coding enables the analysis of qualitative data as it progresses through classification of themes relevant to the study. Schensul (2012) defined it as a process that involves systematically labelling concepts, themes, events so that one can readily retrieve and examine all of the data units that refer to the same subject across all the interviews. It entails the classification of elements in textual data into categories that are related to the study topic. Thus, all text-based interviews can be coded, compared and integrated into patterns that facilitate the analysis.

Bernard and Ryan (2010) explained that the codes add information to the text through a process of interpretation that simultaneously breaks the text down into meaningful chunks or segments. They further upheld that qualitative coding is not just about data reduction, but it is also about data retention. Thus, it is not merely to label all the parts of documents about a topic, but rather to bring them together so they can be reviewed. As explained earlier, the codes can come from theory and explanations 'outside the data' and/or they can 'emerge from the data'.

A general guideline suggested by various qualitative researchers was used while coding of the data (Bernard & Ryan, 2010; Bryman, 2004, 2012; King & Horrocks, 2010; MacQueen, McLellan, Kay, & Milstein, 1998; Patton, 2002; Ritchie & Lewis, 2003; Rubin & Rubin, 2005; Silverman, 2006; Spencer et al., 2003), and the following stages of code development were followed:

1. **Recognition**- This is the first and most important step that helped in sensing themes or recognizing the codable moments. It started with reading the whole text to identify the concepts, i.e. words or terms that represented an idea important to the research, and events, i.e. occurrences. In turn, this led to identification of the major themes by detecting the substantive content and dimensions of the phenomenon of career crafting.

2. The second step was to read again in order to mark the text and highlight relevant material related to the topic. As indicated by Boyatzis (1998), I looked for a theme at the manifest level (directly observable in the information) or at the latent level (underlying the phenomenon).

3. **Clarification**- As the participants were not asked direct questions about career crafting, it was important to specify while looking for themes what was meant by the different concepts and themes to synthesise different events to understand the overall narrative.
4. After the themes were identified, the next step was categorisation, in which descriptive codes with single words or short phrases were defined, and descriptive data were assigned to them. The goal was to identify those parts of the transcript data that were likely to be helpful in addressing the research questions, and the emphasis was on trying to describe what was of interest in the participants’ accounts, rather than seeking to interpret its meaning.

The goal was careful interrogation of the data, and this research used three types of coding as suggested by Bernard and Ryan (2010): descriptive coding – information about the participants, their attributes like gender, age etc.; topic coding – developing nodes; and analytical coding – coding that comes from interpretation and reflection on meaning.

Coding can be a challenge as it needs a precise definition to be able to recognize the phenomenon. Rubin and Rubin (2005) advised that using published literature to suggest concepts and themes by which to code is perfectly legitimate. For example, the major codes with regard to crafting are derived from the job crafting model – cognitive, task and relational crafting (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). Another example is “important others” that was used to describe the important role played by people who matter in forming intentions of a particular behaviour which was utilised by Ajzen and Fishbein (1980, 2005) in their “Theory of Planned Behaviour”.

5. The last step is elaboration and integration in order to synthesize the data units for understanding the overall narrative, and for interpreting the information and themes in the context of a theory or conceptual framework. This was achieved by integrating the themes together, for example, career crafting practices were divided into cognitive, task and relational; and then overall career crafting extent was identified by analysing these practices of the participants.

3.7.4 Nodal structure

Based on the above discussion, ten interviews were used for the preliminary development of the nodal structures. As stated above, NVivo was used for identifying the themes and the text was highlighted and accordingly various nodes were developed. The nodes were created in NVivo and listed alphabetically, not in the order of importance or any such implication. It is important to note that these nodes were developed organically through a few trials, and then they were finalized after deliberations as explained below.

The initial nodal structure was based on the concept of career crafting. However, after investigating the data, it was recognized that this structure weighed in favour of career crafting, and it reflected a
deductive approach; it did not take into account other inputs shared by the participants. As discussed previously, the exploratory nature of the qualitative research favours the inductive approach that begins with specific observations, detects patterns and similarities, and then moves to broader general conclusions and theories. Thus, the themes also incorporate the information that may emerge out of the textual analysis. Furthermore, as the analysis of the textual data progressed, new concepts emerged, for example, career goal clarity, which did not emerge in the literature review.

Therefore, a new structure was developed which was more comprehensive in nature than the previous one that had primarily focused on career crafting. The revised structure considered the different segments of the career pathway in more detail. Further re-reading and analysis of the data revealed that the perception of participants about their career goal and the reality was quite different, therefore it was decided to include that possibility in the themes. The node of activities was expanded to consider the self-developmental activities. Furthermore, the relationship node was expanded to include the different spheres of life.

Considering the above points, a final nodal structure was developed (see Appendix G), and all the transcripts (36) were coded accordingly. The themes in the final structure consisted priori themes and the themes that emerged from the data analysis. As stated before, career clarity appeared as an emerged theme, and it was also realized that it changed over the years; therefore it was decided to cover that aspect with two separate themes – initial and later career clarity. The following discussion focusses on how the codebook was developed and the value codes are described.

3.7.5 Codebook

The codebook functions as a frame or boundary in order to systematically map the information terrain of the text. It also reflects the implicit and explicit research questions. The codes, in turn, function like the coordinates on the map frame; when applied to the text, they link features in the text (e.g. words, sentences, dialogue) to the construct. Following the guidelines provided by MacQueen et al. (1998) and Ryan (1997, as cited in Bernard & Ryan, 2010) the text was coded with consideration of the following basic components: the theme, a brief definition, a full definition, inclusion criteria and typical examples, exclusion criteria and typical examples. It was useful to ask the questions: why the theme was created, some detail of what the theme was about, and what the coded text revealed; Table 3.1 illustrates:
### Table 3-1  Codebook

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mnemonic</th>
<th>A code that appropriately abbreviates the term</th>
<th>Example: CC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Short Description</td>
<td>A single word or short phrase that communicates the general idea</td>
<td>Cognitive Crafting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detailed Description</td>
<td>Most common features of the theme</td>
<td>Self-awareness, prioritizing, conceptualisation of career goal, reframing goals, perception and the reality, reframing perception of personal and professional life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusion Criteria</td>
<td>Consists the features that must be present</td>
<td>The participants have made a cognitive change to their thinking and have redefined their perspective, exhibited either one or more of the above description.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typical Exemplars</td>
<td>The typical behaviour that exemplifies the theme</td>
<td>A participant described his thought process about switching to academia – “I don’t like clocking in basically. You do accept a lower salary and a lower standard of living in an academic world, but then again I’ve got lot more freedom.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exclusion Criteria</td>
<td>The features that exclude a segment from being considered a member of the category.</td>
<td>None of the above described elements were exhibited, the participant has gone more with the flow in a passive manner and took decisions not really knowing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typical Exemplars</td>
<td>The typical behaviour that exemplifies the theme</td>
<td>“I went to the varsity, again I am not sure why I picked up the BCom, and again when I started work I wasn’t really sure, what my plans were. Sort of fell into the career...”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 3.7.6 Value Coding

As has been discussed previously, one of the main challenges in qualitative research is determining how to measure participants’ categorized responses, and it is difficult because of the non-numerical data. The complexity of non-variable textual data makes it challenging for making comparisons in their raw form. To deal with this issue, Benz and Newman (2008) suggested that a holistic conceptualisation of research can be incorporated into the analysis with qualitative methods as the beginning points with its rich, in-depth descriptions and that can be aided by quantifying the textual information in a systematic manner. Bernard and Ryan (2010) have recommended that, this can be achieved by using value coding, which is reducing text to scales. The intent is not quantifying the qualitative data, but as Bloomberg and Volpe (2012) maintained, using it as a supplement to the narrative. As described earlier in the discussion on the continuum of qualitative and quantitative research (see Figure 3.1), by adding the dimension of quantitative measurement, the position is shifted toward the right.

Thus, for coding purposes, the two streams of qualitative and quantitative research were integrated by using ordinal variables to measure and group the level of responses. While these categories helped to understand the levels of relative measurement among variables, as Bernard and Ryan (2010) suggested, they do not contain absolute information about how much of something is more than or less than something else. This also means that richness of the original data may have to be sacrificed, but the variables can be systematically compared and the patterns can be more easily identified.
Another point to be noted is that, while adding the dimension of quantifying data (partially), the danger as indicated by Teddlie and Tashakkori (2010) is that some researchers might assume that after constructing domains of meaning from a qualitative study, they can code those themes as variables, and claim that they are using mixed methods. This research understands the power of mixed methods research, and makes no such claim.

Rather, the current approach favours the qualitative method of enquiry, resorting to the quantitative side for measuring and categorising the responses for some of the nodes and only as a suggestive evidence. Since the sample size is small (36), the association between the value-coded variables cannot be treated as conclusive evidence. Value coding was mainly utilised for the key influencing factors, some are explained below.

**Career crafting**

To reiterate, career crafting interlinks cognitive (CC), task (TC) and relational (RC) crafting. These are not mutually exclusive, rather they are intertwined and may occur in conjunction with one another or give rise to the other (Berg et al., 2010). Hence it is difficult to segregate them completely, and different combinations of these elements were found in the data. If any one or a combination of elements was identified, the utterance was coded accordingly under the three components of career crafting, value coded, and then rated for their practice of career crafting according to the combination of CC, TC and RC. Following is an example of value coding for cognitive crafting (CC).

- Nil – not aware of their potential and had no clarity
- Low – slight understanding of themselves and the career goal
- Medium – a fair self-concept and clarity about the career goal
- High – absolutely confident of their potential and a clear cut goal

**Family support**

Initially it was decided to use the ordinal rating scale of nil, low, medium, and high for rating the family support similar to the other nodes. But it proved inadequate when it was realised that a few of the participants (4) had to face difficult situations with regard to family support which had an adverse influence on the course of their careers. The rating of nil would have implied the response incorrectly, hence, a negative value code was added to the rating scale.

The data also indicated that family support included general and specific support. General support was in terms of offering encouragement and backing the career choice, but not necessarily providing a direction or constructive support; specific support was constructively guiding, creating and providing learning experiences, facilitating specific career goals. Thus, if they received both general and specific support, it was rated at a high level.
Negative – faced opposition about the choice or had to face an adverse situation at home which compelled in making forced choices
Nil – no support from the family
Low – low level of support
Medium – good support
High – full support and encouragement from family

**Personal success**

Personal success is proposed as a combination of career clarity, the sense of accomplishment, work-life balance, and life and job satisfaction. On the evaluative side, the approach used here focuses on the reporting of satisfaction by the participants, and interpretation of success through the interviews. It is not being suggested that this a unique and precise criterion but it covers the important aspects of the construct. As this is a qualitative research, the interview inputs may give rise to other aspects of it as reported by participants, the study is open to such inclusions.

This was principally based on the interview inputs as well as the participants’ responses to the job and life satisfaction items on the data sheet. The following is an example of life satisfaction; similarly other constructs were rated and then the rating was aggregated to formulate the understanding of the sense of personal success to the participants.

- Nil – they were not satisfied
- Low – somewhat satisfied
- Medium – satisfied
- High – very much satisfied

Thus, after deciding on the structure and value of the theme codes, the next step was to establish validity of the coding as the contested nature of the interpretive nature of qualitative research raises questions of validity, especially with regard to researcher’s ability to infer from the data. The following section explains how triangulation was used to confirm the themes and validate the coding process.

### 3.7.7 Triangulation

As explained before, triangulation has been suggested as one of the ways of establishing validity in qualitative research because of its interpretive nature (section 3.3). However, researchers have also commented on the limitations of triangulation. Lankshear and Knobel (2004) contended that traditional triangulation can become highly reductive since it is concerned with convergence: with arriving at a single, tidy interpretation to explain the “truth” about a phenomenon. Richardson and St. Pierre (2008) also disputed the usefulness of the triangulation method. They argued that the
central image for qualitative inquiry should be the crystal, not the triangle which they think of as a rigid, fixed, two-dimensional object.

While understanding the above views, this study agrees with the opinion of Bloomberg and Volpe (2012) that triangulation adequately ensures that the researcher’s own biases do not influence how participants’ perspectives are portrayed. The main benefit of triangulation is that it helps to minimize the potential of bias in coding and thereby interpretation of the data (Thurmond, 2001). Therefore, although in a limited way, it is believed that triangulation does help in checking for consistent patterns of theme development, basically to determine whether the findings are accurate from the standpoint of the research, and not just the researcher.

Based on the above discussion, it was decided to use triangulation to validate the coding in the initial stages to ensure the communicative validity. This was done by cross-examining interpretation of the data through outside audit, i.e. involving other people, other than the researcher; a PhD candidate and an academic were engaged for the purposes. The theme of career clarity was chosen for the rating of the constituents. A document was prepared (see Appendix H), and was given to the above mentioned people for confirmation of the initial ideas through triangulation. The concepts of career clarity and career crafting were explained to them and they were asked to categorise the given statements according to the concept and the value codes. Their responses were compared to the interpretations of the researcher, which revealed a close match between understandings of the themes. Discussion with these two colleagues also helped in clarifying some of the concepts around interpreting the incidents of career crafting in the data and it also confirmed the researcher’s designations.

3.7.8 A note on data presentation

In qualitative research when interviewing is the main source of the data, findings are typically described in a narrative manner with extensive samples of quotations from participants. Since the textual data is usually rich in information, it is compelling to use the verbatim passages. These quotations provide detail as well as substantiate the story by providing evidence for the interpretations. Corden and Sainsbury (2006) found in their study of qualitative researchers that verbatim quotations were used with the purposes of: as the matter of enquiry, as evidence, as explanation, as illustration, to deepen understanding; and to give participants a voice.

However, researchers caution that the overuse of these passages can make a research account tedious to read, voluminous in length, and can easily distract from the clarity of the main commentary (Rubin & Rubin, 2005; White, Woodfield, & Ritchie, 2003). Therefore, the depth and
richness of interview textual data present a considerable challenge in reporting, and the key is to use the original passages sparingly, and for well-judged purposes.

Bloomberg and Volpe (2012) suggested that there are two ways of presenting findings; both are found useful in this research. One way is to develop profiles of individual participants and to group these into categories. The profiles are used as case studies in Chapter 5 to illustrate the paradigm of career crafting. The second approach is to mark individual passages or excerpts from the transcripts and group these in thematically connected categories. This is more suited to the purpose of exploring the concept of career crafting, and is utilised to extract the crafting incidents in the next two chapters.

### 3.8. Conclusion

This chapter marks the end of planning and preparation by establishing the foundation to support the research methodology of this thesis. Firstly, it elaborated on why the qualitative approach was selected for the study describing the main characteristics. Maintaining ethical conduct is vital in qualitative research as it involves personal interaction with the participants, where they are not just a number but are collaborators in the research process. In the same vein, the role of the researcher is different in qualitative research in the sense that she is not distanced from the participants and co-creates knowledge with their participation. This researcher is aware of the interpretive paradigm, and the importance of careful and honest handling of the data. The research design was outlined in detail particularly explaining the procedure of data collection, how and why in-depth interviewing was used, and how the data was captured and transcribed.

Data management is particularly challenging in qualitative research as there are no numerical variables and definitive answers, but it is largely based on the interpretation of the textual data. Therefore, the discussion outlined how scientific rigour was attained during the data analysis. NVivo software was used on the basis of the nodal structure that was prepared after much deliberation and triangulation.

In the light of the above discussed research plan, the next chapter describes how the textual data was interpreted in order to analyse the career pathways of the participants and it also identifies the major influencing external factors in the career development process. The emphasis is on the themes that emerged from the interaction with the participants. Specifically, an attempt is made to understand the process of formulating career goals. The forming of the pathways is elaborated for the accounting sector, and on the basis of this discussion, career orientation of the participants with regard to gender is determined.
Chapter 4
Analysing Career Pathways

4.1. Introduction

This research has developed a new career development paradigm based on the main concept of the job crafting model, career literature and an in-depth examination of participants’ experiences. The intentional communion between the researcher and the participants has led to the new approach of career crafting that elaborates on the different determinants of career development. In this exploratory study, qualitative research was most appropriate for discovering deeper meanings as the different layers of the career crafting phenomenon emerged after the intricate analysis.

This chapter takes a comprehensive approach to understanding the way in which the participants in the present study have navigated their professional and personal roles. The specifics of the career pathways are analysed drawing on the interviews of the 36 accounting profession participants – 15 accounting academics working in universities and 21 accounting practitioners in the mainstream firms. In this chapter, the pathways of the study’s participants are explored on the basis of their verbatim accounts.

As accounting professionals, they all were required to follow a route prescribed by academia or NZICA (as explained below), but a striking feature of the participants’ career pathways is the diversity. Contrary to the traditional career patterns identified in the literature review, there was considerable variation between and within the groups of male and female participants. It is evident that the participants have taken different routes to arrive at the current career position based on their career decisions. This chapter describes the forming of these different routes in more detail.

Chapter 2 elaborated on the distinct differences between career patterns with regard to gender. Here, the career orientation of the participants is identified highlighting the different approaches that male and female participants had adopted towards their career. The career decisions are explored through textual analysis – examining how their career pathways developed as they made the decisions, what factors influenced these, and what their future plans were at the time of interview. The influence of external factors on the participants is discussed in this chapter. The discussion related to “self” (individual factors) is postponed to the next Chapter (5), as it is the main organising principle of career crafting. It therefore needs a more detailed investigation and identification of the different impacts that “self” categorised factors have on career crafting.
Accounting as a profession is guided by the professional accounting institute and aspiring members have to fulfil the criterion for joining the institute. Therefore, before we explore the pathways of the participants, it is important to understand these guidelines prescribed by accounting sector and academia.

4.1.1 Prescribed pathways in the accounting sector and academia

The New Zealand Institute of Chartered Accountants (NZICA)\(^\text{13}\) is the professional body of accountants in New Zealand. Only individuals completing the qualifications prescribed by NZICA can act as professional accountants in the field. The Institute describes Chartered Accountants (CAs) as highly qualified accounting professionals who have completed the required degree level study supplemented with workplace experience and a professional competence programme.

NZICA offers three membership pathways to the aspirants – Chartered Accountant (CA), Associate CA (ACA), and Accounting Technician (AT) – as explained below. Only CAs can offer their services to the public as a Chartered Accountant, in that sense, the other two members are not treated as qualified professional practicing accountants; but they can offer supplementary services.

The Chartered Accountants (CA) programme combines academic qualifications and mentored practical experience to become a member. The career route in accounting firms is typical: graduates join a firm as an intern, and then they climb the ladder progressing from Assistant Manager, Manager, Senior Manager, Associate/Executive Director, through to the top position of Partner. Chartered Accountants are accepted in academic positions on the basis of their qualifications and experience, however they have to complete PhD if they wish to progress in academia. In this research, 28 of the 36 participants are CAs.

The second pathway of ACA requires completion of a recognised academic programme, a practical experience programme and a professional competence programme. This designation recognises individuals who may not wish to train to be Chartered Accountants but who want to be recognised for their skills in business and finance. ACAs work across all sectors including the corporate sector, public practice and public sector. They also work in senior roles in business. Experience in academia is recognized by the professional body of CAs, and it awards ACA membership to accounting academics based on their tertiary teaching experience. As one of the research participants shared, “Once you have got a PhD and you are a senior lecturer, then the Institute of CA will give you membership. So you actually become a CA, but not in a normal way.” Five non-CA academics have

\(^{13}\) As stated earlier, at the time of data collection New Zealand Institute for Chartered Accountants was the professional body, but it later incorporated with its Australian counterpart in November 2013, and now it is known as Chartered Accountants Australia and New Zealand.
opted for this type of membership. In addition to the teaching experience, they had to complete certain modules to qualify for the ACA membership.

The third pathway of accounting technicians provides an opportunity to be formally recognized for the accounting work experience for those who do not wish to study towards a full academic qualification. There are certain practical training modules they have to complete. They work for both private and public sector organizations, where they undertake a wide range of accountancy, financial and taxation tasks. They often work with and assist CAs. Three participants from this study’s group belong to this type. They do not have the required academic qualifications, but with their practical experience and training they have progressed in their career.

With regard to other participant group, the New Zealand academic sector has eight universities, and is based largely on the British system. The academic hierarchy rises from Assistant Lecturer, Lecturer, Senior Lecturer, and Associate Professor to Professor. A suitable academic qualification is required to enter the tertiary teaching profession, and then the academic climbs the ladder with teaching and research experience and achievements. Completing PhD is necessary for getting a permanent position and to advance in the career.

The career routes described above seem to be standardised pathways for accounting professionals, planning to enter academia or accounting firms. However, the following analysis demonstrates that the journeys of these men and women as academics and as accounting practitioners; though comparable in their preparation for the profession, is different and therefore provides an interesting contrast.

Building on the groundwork established by the literature review, the discussion in this chapter is illustrated by quotations that present the multiple perspectives of the participants. The following section addresses Research Question 1 – How have the participants in the study paved their career pathways?

### 4.2. Formation of career pathways

One of the primary goals of this study is to develop a better understanding of the participants’ career pathways by exploring the different career decisions related to their professional and personal lives. A career pathway can be understood as an outcome of a particular sequence of events that begins with the first job. Rallis and Rossman (2012) proposed that the metaphor of a pathway signifies

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14It is customary to present quotes more than three lines in indented form. However, this research has not always followed this practice, as the textual data is treated as a part of the text, acknowledging the collaborative role of the participants, and it was also thought that indentation may break the flow of the narrative in some places.
development over time. This career journey can also be likened to a trek, an undertaking on a difficult and not necessarily straightforward path. One needs to be capable of dealing with detours and delays, perhaps some bad advice or poor decisions, some back tracking, occasional indecision about the next move, changes in environment or chance events which may dictate a completely new, unplanned direction.

As discussed in the literature review presented in Chapter 2, the stages of the career cycle are neither lockstep nor linear (Christensen et al., 1988), and those may not be rungs on a career ladder either. In fact, a number of participants in this study have moved in and out of different stages many times during their career, forming a lattice-like pattern. This is illustrated in Appendix K (explained below in section 4.2.1). This might be because career cycles are also influenced by personal and organisational environments. As decisions were made about professional development, they seemed to have been impacted by the network of interacting factors that considerably influenced career stages.

Pathways can also be determined by the deliberate career planning that goes into the process. Career planning has been defined by Dessler and Varkkey (2011, p. 359) as the formal process through which someone becomes aware of his or her personal skills, interests, knowledge, motivations, and other characteristics; where one acquires information about opportunities and choices, identifies career related goals, and establishes action plans to attain specific goals.

For some participants, it was indeed a well thought-out career option – James said that he decided to become an accountant when he was in the fourth form in school. However, for most of the participants their career evolved – sometimes as a “series of mistakes” as Roger described his career journey, or a natural unfolding flow of subsequent goals as they continued on the pathway steadily. Patrick, for example, noted that, “There was a realignment of jobs and some of the work I was doing under my administrative role directed me into project management.”

Conversely, as a number of participants experienced, and to rephrase Bandura (2001), there was a lot of fortuity in the courses their careers (lives) took and when some participants planned their career journeys, it was not a formal and deliberate process. Indeed, as can be seen from the participants’ accounts, some of the most important determinants of life paths occurred through the most coincidental circumstances. This resulted in people being initiated into new occupational streams or new careers. For example, Jeremy did not have a clear career goal. He explained how the accounting pathway was created for him, saying “My father actually knew one of the partners of the firm, he happened to run into him in the street, and said, ‘My son is about to apply for jobs’, [and the partner] said – ‘Send him along’, so that was it. I had a meeting and they employed me.”
Similarly Nathan shared his experience which has led him onto the accounting pathway. He had dropped out of university and was looking for work. “A friend of mine was working for a recruitment firm in London, and basically she said to me, ‘There is a real shortage of people in financial services.’ I said – I am not really qualified to work, she said, ‘Are you good with numbers?’ I said yes, and I turned up for the job interview. I ended up working in management and financial accounting roles for a couple of big companies, so through good ‘luck’ rather than good ‘management’ one might say.” Later on he aimed at earning an accounting qualification and became a professional accountant.

Sally commented on the formation of her career pathway, “I think some people have a focus that this is their career, and this is what they do, and they kind of fit their personal life around that. I think mine has been an evolving piece of work that has happened altogether.” Sarah took a broader approach looking back at her career – “So there is always a sort of matrix of personal life, personal decisions, career desires and goals, personal opportunities and that all intermeshes with economy…”

4.2.1 Career lattice

A preliminary analysis of the participants’ career pathways yielded career lattice structures (see Appendix K) which illustrates a variety of patterns. The graphs confirm that career patterns do not always represent a linear progression on a career ladder, but as described by Benko and Weisberg (2007), they rather resemble a career lattice that describes a career path as an undulating journey of climbs, lateral moves, and planned (and unplanned) descents, allowing people to follow paths that are more fluid and adaptive. Therefore, it warrants further investigation.

The graphs are not drawn to scale and include only major turns. The lines represent the connections between career decisions from the beginning to the current position. Letters M and F are used to denote male and female respectively. Subscripts are used to track the pathways of the individuals. They mainly represent the career flow, the positions in the organisations and the sector. Three career phases are with reference to the pathways – start, middle and current. Thus, midcareer does not commensurate with age, but it is with reference to when the participants started their careers. Moreover, the phases also demonstrate the navigational change the participants have made, before settling down in the current sector.

The hierarchical level is denoted by the position which was categorised on the basis of seven types, zero level is the entry point, five levels denote the different positions in the organisational hierarchy, and the sixth level denotes when the participants had their own firms/business. The description of position with regard to the levels (0 to 6) is as follows:
The graphs illustrate the intricate patterns of the pathways as a result of the career decisions of the 36 participants. The whole of the career pathway is mapped on the lattice, to which the individuals are inextricably connected. Overall one third of them (12) have indeed taken the traditional ladder path, with ten male participants steadily climbing the hierarchy and the two female participants continuing on the same pathway, after taking a break for family reasons. Out of these twelve, some of them had a very clear career goal, and had decided early on in life, in school that they wanted to be Chartered Accountants, while others developed the goal on the way to the university. For the rest of them (24) it has been a combination of ascents and descents, breaks, and shifts to different sectors.

The graphs represent a variety of patterns consisting of conventional paths and alterations, which is why they need to be deciphered with a key of career crafting. In order to understand these career graphs, it is important to know their bases, the viewpoint from which they were paved on the basis of the decisions; and also some specific information about the person’s intentions which cannot be part of the graph. Although there are considerable differences in the career patterns, there are also common factors in the way the careers have developed and the way in which they have incorporated the external elements across the group.

As explained earlier, this study looks beyond the objective measures like the position the participants hold in the organizations, and examines how satisfied they are with the various aspects of their lives and how their life experiences match up against their expectations. The graphs provide a basic idea about the pathways, but this study aims to learn more about how individuals make these often complicated choices and trade-offs mainly through the interpretation of the participants’ narratives. It seeks to understand the circumstances both at home and work that surround these decisions. In addition, it is expected that deeper insights into the factors that govern these decisions will be gained – the thought processes, what has transpired, the reasons behind their initial career decisions, their most recent moves, and their near future plans, and most importantly, will link these with the career crafting approach.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Academia</strong></td>
<td>Tutor</td>
<td>Assistant lecturer</td>
<td>Lecturer</td>
<td>Senior lecturer</td>
<td>Associate professor</td>
<td>Professor</td>
<td>Business owner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Firms</strong></td>
<td>Intern</td>
<td>Accountant</td>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>Senior manager</td>
<td>Executive director</td>
<td>Partner</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4-1 Description of positions in academia and firms
4.2.2 Career pathway as an accounting academic

As explained earlier, academics in the tertiary sector have to follow certain guidelines (section 4.1.1). Two pathways to becoming an academic have been described – intentional and accidental academics (Lindholm, 2004). Intentional academics are those who determine decisively as undergraduate or graduate students that they would pursue an academic career. In contrast, for accidental academics the career decision making process is random or fortuitous.

In this research, none of the fifteen academic participants were intentional academics in its pure sense, i.e., none pursued academia as their career intentionally. Lacking any sort of coherent structure or intentionality in choosing the academic route, all of them were thus accidental academics. But as seen from their accounts, once they were exposed to the world of academia, they intentionally chose it as their career. Therefore, they can be termed as “incidental” academics. Among them, again, were two types – accounting practitioners who decided to shift to academia from firms or from other sectors, and those who decided to take this pathway while they pursued accounting degrees in the universities.

Of the fifteen participants, ten who shifted to academia already had the professional qualification of Chartered Accountancy. Three had worked in other sectors, but they decided to shift to academia. Seven participants had worked in mainstream firms as accounting practitioners, but an encounter with academia as a guest lecturer made them realise that this was a better career option than being practitioners. Having worked in the firms for several years, these participants found the work too stressful and/or that it no longer suited their changed family circumstances. Eventually, they chose accounting academia for a better work-life balance and/or to satisfy their personal career goals. It was easy for them to make the transition as there are no specific qualifications for teaching in universities, and their professional qualifications (Chartered Accountancy) and practical experience were sufficient to be accepted as lecturers. However, if they wished to be promoted to the higher positions they were required to complete the PhD, which some had attained and the others in this category were working towards it.

The other five participants decided to become academics while they were pursuing accounting degrees in universities. Two of these were fresh graduates and the other three were mature students who did not go straight from school to university. Instead, after several years of work experience they went to university as their “second innings”, to satisfy their desire to learn and also to further develop themselves.

Thus, none of these five participants were studying with an intention of becoming an academic. They were all offered tutoring opportunities while studying at the university, and on proving their
competence as a tutor and on completing the academic qualifications, they were offered further lecturing opportunities. These they accepted, as by then, they had become well-acquainted with the academic life, and could see it as a prospective career. They had also realized that they loved teaching and research, and enjoyed certain perks associated with the job.

Thereafter, it was a conscious decision to progress by concentrating on the activities required in order to work their way up on the academic career ladder. Everett, Neu and Green (2003) found that the culture of accounting academe accepts a junior faculty member after proving his/her effective teaching ability and an ability to publish good scientific research in quality, referred journals. This was echoed in the experience of these participants.

Thus, it can be summarised from the above discussion that in this sample, accounting academics have followed two career pathways: Student-tutor-to-academic or Chartered Accountant-to-academic. Therefore, it was decided to use these categories to describe the career pathways, as shown in Table 4.2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Student-tutor-to-academic</th>
<th>CA-to-academic</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The numbers are almost identical with regard to gender and do not reveal much information about the formation of their career pathways. This is where the qualitative approach plays an important role as it can go deeper and explore the story behind the numbers. The interaction with the participants underlined the reasons for these decisions, and each story is different. Some representative cases are illustrated below.

**Student-tutor-to-academic route**

Of the three male “Student-tutor-to-Academics” participants, two were fresh graduates. One of the graduates preferred the role of an academic to a practitioner after becoming CA by completing the professional and academic qualifications, while the other did not have a specific career goal. In fact, he endured enormous pressure to join the family business which he did not wish to do, so he saw taking up teaching as a way out of the situation, and seized this opportunity recognizing it as a suitable career goal. He worked toward the completion of the postgraduate degree whilst simultaneously teaching lower level classes, and further confirmed his academic position by completing the PhD programme.
The third male participant’s story is more involved. Michael was a high-school drop-out because of personal circumstances. Then he ventured in different employment sectors, initially as a scooter mechanic and later working in the financial sector. He reached the highest positions in those organisations despite having no academic qualifications. After several years of work experience, he decided to go back to university. He recollected, “... and I remember thinking this just isn’t really the world that I want to be in.” He shared his thought process about the decision. “I had various financial assets and I thought to myself, I asked myself the question, and I still remember, if I never study and I get to the end of my life, would I be happy? And I decided the answer is no, I’d never be happy.” So he ended up quitting work to study at the university and took the bold decision of funding his three years’ full time course by selling one of his properties. Giving up the job meant additional and substantial sacrifices – “I took a pay drop to come here, a relatively significant pay drop, but I wouldn’t have done this any other way.” Like the other two male participants, he was offered tutoring opportunities that he enjoyed, and he has now progressed on to an academic position.

The two female academics also had different stories. Sally already had a degree in Environmental Science, and had worked in that field, but later as a single mother the responsibility of her young daughter navigated her career in a different direction. She decided to re-kindle her interest in accounting from her school days as her all-girls school did not offer the subject, and enrolled for an accounting degree at the university. The other one, Sue pursued a university education once her children were older, and chose accounting. She did not have a chance to study accounting in her school, though for a different reason: the classes in her school were streamed, and being in the top stream she had to do sciences and languages.

Thus, the reasons for choosing accounting academia for the participants are quite different. The male participants mainly chose it to satisfy their own career goals, and not for family reasons. In contrast, both the women chose academia because along with satisfying their personal interests, it offered them flexibility with regard to managing family responsibilities. For Sue flexibility meant, “As long as you are there for your lectures and you are there for a couple of office hours a week, didn’t matter when you did your work. So I’d come back after they [the children] were all in bed at nine at night, and did a couple of hours... worked then.” The non-CA academics have completed the professional requirements and are now Associate Chartered Accountants.

CA-to-Academic route

The ten “CA-to-academic” participants decided to shift to academia predominantly for flexibility and for a better work-life balance. For the five male participants, it was largely for job satisfaction, control, independence, and flexibility. Arthur expressed this view, saying “Yes, I just felt it [academia] was really much more satisfying. I could have that much more control over what I was doing. I could
decide what was important, and I liked the idea of doing research, and was curious about things.”
Ryan was with an accounting firm and his initial ambition was to become a partner, but this changed
with a lecturing opportunity:

Obviously the experience of lecturing, the role, that I quite enjoyed, and getting into
research. In the accounting profession you have to account for every six minutes of time and
accounting is a very time pressured sort of role, there is a huge budget pressure on you all
the time...

Like the female student-tutor-to-academics, the five female accounting practitioners switched to
academia primarily because of family responsibilities. It was a well-thought out decision for Jane:

Knowing friends working in the corporate, in the CA environments... it is not quite as easy for
them now that they have got children. So I think you have to look at the whole package.
Though financially I would be better off working in the CA environment or working in the
corporate than what I am here, but when you factor in all of those other things that
sometimes you just can’t put a price on it, especially having young children...

Similarly, Sarah shared that – “What I had underestimated was that accounting is very demanding,
and that it does take up a lot of time. In practice there are times when there are deadlines, and you
are just required to keep working nights, weekends, and evenings... to get something finished. It’s
not family friendly, and that’s the reason I decided to go into academic work.”

The discussion above has described the different career pathways of the study’s accounting
academic participants. It has re-affirmed the discussion in Chapter 2 about the salience of
expectations concerning a primary role for women as a caregiver, and their decisions having a more
relational emphasis than those of men who emphasise the values of self-enhancement and
independence much more than women.

4.2.3 Career pathway as an accounting practitioner

As stated earlier, the professional accounting body NZICA offers membership to individuals who have
completed the required professional qualifications, and practitioners are required to have a
Chartered Accounting certificate to practice. Some of the participants working in the firms had a
clear initial goal of working as an accounting practitioner, whereas the others developed the goal
later after a series of other jobs, see Table 4.3.
Table 4-3  Pathways of accounting practitioners

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Initial career goal of a CA</th>
<th>Joined later after other work experience</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Eleven participants had an initial career goal of becoming an accounting practitioner. Both male and female participants tended to exhibit similar thinking patterns. Some had absolute clarity from a young age. Cheryl shared, “I had wanted to be an accountant since I was maybe ten or so”. Similarly James stated, “I decided to become a chartered accountant when I was in the fourth form at school.” Others developed this goal along the way. It was not their first career choice, but it became their career goal after high school. Mandy said, “I was never going to do accounting, so all through the school I did fine arts…” Personal circumstances [illness] made her rethink her options. With her father’s advice she opted for accounting, whereas some of the other participants, as Scott expressed, “… sort of fell into accounting”.

For the ten who joined accounting later, the choice was a well-thought out decision after their experience in other jobs. Some of them did not have the necessary qualifications and hence went to the university to get a degree with an intention of becoming an accounting professional. Daniel explained, saying, “I figured that I needed to give myself an injection of credibility; I didn’t want to start at the bottom.” Yvonne had practical experience in a series of accounting related jobs, so she recounted that, “I decided that was a logical path for me, to keep me challenged.”

The above discussion has outlined the career pathways of participants in academia and in firms; as can be seen from their accounts, the journey was a series of career decisions at different life and professional stages. Some of the participants changed their pathway a number of times to arrive at their present position. In order to explore the specific journeys the participants have taken, it is necessary to look more closely at them. The following section addresses Research Question 2 – How are initial career goals connected to career position and future career goals?

4.3.  Formulation of career goals

Career goals are formulated as people make a variety of choices and trade-offs to integrate their personal and professional lives. These decisions form the different parts of a pathway. These are further explored by segmenting them temporally to understand the conceptualisation of career goals at different stages and the factors influencing at those points in time. In order to study the pathway in detail, it was decided to break it down into three main segments (see Figure 4.1):
1. Initial career goal – the idea of original career pathway and the influencers.

2. Subsequent pathway – succeeding goals on the same initial pathway.

3. Future goals – ambitions, where do they see themselves in future.

Figure 4-1 Career pathway segments

The closeness of the present career pathway to the initial goal was also investigated through their interviews. Table 4.4 demonstrates the closeness to the initial pathway.

Table 4-4 Initial career goal and the present pathway

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pathway same as the initial goal</th>
<th>Pathway not same as the initial goal</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pathway same</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pathway same</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As it can be observed from the above table, a number of the participants (24) have created a new career pathway by making a navigational change. Therefore, Figure 4.2 modified Figure 4.1 in order to incorporate this diversity into the pattern:

Figure 4-2 Modified career pathways

As referred earlier, career cycles include three phases; exploration, growth and establishment (Super, 1980). These decision points reflect encounters with a variety of personal and situational determinants. For some people, the exploration stage is a long one, they struggle to find a suitable option; while others take firm decisions early in the life and walk steadily on that pathway.

Though individuals ultimately decide for themselves what is meaningful for them, they are strongly influenced by the social and situational forces in the process. Thus, goals vary with personal and family background, socio-economic status, educational achievements, occupation, position,
workplace, and the environment at large. The following discussion explores the formation of these pathways, starting with conceptualising of the initial goal, subsequent goals and then considering any future plans the participants reported in their career progression.

4.3.1 Initial career goal

As it has been identified in the literature (Bandura, 1997) and confirmed above, the choices people make during the formative periods of their career shape the course of their lives. The decision about their first job paves the way for the career trajectory ahead, though as seen earlier in the career lattice (see Appendix K), it is not a fixed pathway. The decisions people make about their career directions fluctuate and the path is navigated depending on the personal circumstances and the external factors that impact on their lives. It was identified that 23 joined university to get a degree, but of them only 14 had a clear goal and they went to university with the aim of getting the necessary qualifications, others developed a goal while working towards their degree. The remaining 13 participants left high school, and took up jobs locally or went for OE.

As illustrated in Table 4.5 below, a majority of the participants in this study were unclear about their initial career goal, with more female participants than male being unsure about the initial pathway.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Clear goal</th>
<th>Unclear goal</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Clear initial goal

The participants who had a clear career goal from a young age shared their decision-making process in the interviews. The textual analysis unearthed a variety of factors that influenced their decisions. One of the 14 clear goal participants, Alice, recollected that, “Ever since I was 13, I think I wanted to become an accountant.” She attributed the decision to the fact that “I just always liked numbers, and then I took accounting in third or fourth form, so I was always doing accounting from then.” A family member also seems to have influenced her decision, “I had an uncle that was studying to be an accountant; he wasn’t too much older than me”; as well as her school, “I had an influential accounting teacher, just really good.” Similarly, Albert was good in Maths, and decided early on, “I went straight into the course of Chartered Accountancy.” He also acknowledges the role played by

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15 Overseas Experience (OE) is a New Zealand term for an extended overseas working period or holiday. This is self-funded and the person returns after a few years; armed with the work and life experience, and wider outlook obtained overseas.
his family, “Parents encouraged me in that direction”; as well as the school, “Yes, it’s happened at school, you know careers evenings and so forth.”

James was also supported by his family and school, but took a different route to pursue his accounting qualification. He left school because he benefitted from a scholarship from IRD\(^\text{16}\), where he could work part-time, gain experience as well as earn money, and pursue education, “Work [IRD] gave me the time off to go to lectures, so then I could go from work to the lectures, and that was all paid, paid full time.”

A few participants did not plan to do accounting early on, but developed an interest along the way. Mandy, for example noted that she “… was never going to do accounting, so all through school I did fine arts.” However, that changed as,

I couldn’t go away to university because of how sick I was … so it was dad who put the seed of accounting in my head. He really convinced me that that would be a really general degree that would have wide applications that would be really useful.

Mandy worked hard, and “By the second year I really ramped it up and then decided that I would specialise in accounting and do tax.” She is grateful for the support by her family, “My dad and my mum made me believe I could do anything”; as well as her school, “It was really them [school] giving me that unwavering belief that I could do what I wanted.”

Similarly Roger was going to do psychology, but he had earned an A+ in accounting at school, which was coupled with the opportunity, “They [liberal arts school] created a series of further incremental steps that brought me to kind of where I’m today. I was sent a letter over summer inviting me to take a more advanced accounting class.” He could see that, “Accounting and finance was one of the fairly powerful arms to most of these companies…” Family also had an indirect influence, “My father is a practising accountant… probably I am sure I took it thinking that I will be interested maybe see what my dad, what he has been doing all these years, to better understand what he does.”

Unclear initial goal

Twenty-two participants did not have a clear initial goal; a few did not continue their education after high school and worked in a variety of fields, while others followed a different academic path. The examples below illustrate the experiences of some of the participants when they talked about their initial career decisions.

Ruth did not pursue accounting, as, “My father was an architect and he definitely looked down on accountants.” The school also did not point her in the accounting direction. “I don’t think there were

\(^{16}\) Inland Revenue Department.
accounting classes at my school,” she said. “No one at school ever suggested accounting as a career option; I don’t think any girls from my class became accountants. They became lawyers, doctors and nurses, teachers, and dentists.” She thinks the larger environment also played a dissuading role, “…but accounting has been viewed as the stepping stone into the professional class, now you’re looking at other professions, they will all look down on accountants.” Mary did not really think about a career at all, as “At that time in the 70s when I got married, everyone was going to... stay at home and have children.”

Michael ascribed not having a clear goal to his personal circumstances. “There was always a lot of tension at home and ultimately my parents separated, and divorced. So the way things were at home I thought I really wanted to get out, and the only way to really do that was to start work”. In addition to that was the low support from school. “So I go in as a 13 year old, as a top class, and it was a horrible year. I worked so hard, didn’t get the results I thought, and as a 14 year old I was put into, well, not the top class.” So, “I actually quit high school, and worked in a couple of jobs.”

The above illustrations establish a common theme running through the accounts; that of the major role played by family, school and environment in shaping expectations and consequently setting career goals (elaborated later in sections 4.5, 4.6 & 4.7). Thus, a person’s initial career goal paved the start of the pathway, followed by steady progress or detours depending on the succeeding influences and decisions. The following section discusses the consecutive segment of the pathway.

4.3.2 Subsequent goals

As illustrated in the career lattice (see Appendix K), 12 of the 36 participants carried on the same pathway, in the same sector. The reasons for their decision to continue on the same pathway were mainly: growth, they progressed steadily on the same pathway with self-efforts as well as support from the organisation; or maintenance, where they liked the routine, felt comfortable, their family was happy and so were left with no will, confidence, or motivation to test a new ground. Some preferred to stay put in New Zealand for their family’s sake, citing New Zealand as a nice place to bring up children or saying that they wanted to be close to their parents. The following discussion explores the process of forming the subsequent pathway and identifies the influencing factors.

Jeremy shared what led him to continue his present job:

   We had planned to go for OE [overseas experience]. But my wife became pregnant which wasn’t quite planned, and we would have been going into a UK winter with a two month old baby. So it was either go overseas or take up the position of a manager. I decided to do the manager thing first.
Thereafter he decided to stay put as, “There were a couple of times I looked at within the firm, but the share crash and the world economy, and the lack of jobs shortly after that, so... and then we started having more children. And I enjoyed the job here.”

Cheryl has progressed well in her career and wishes to continue on the same pathway; she is aware that: “I was always a homebody, I was from X city, and it took me a lot to move to Y city in the first place, and I have spent a lot of my weekends in going back home and seeing my family. And so, to go beyond that would be way out of my comfort zone.” Also she is very happy with the organisation she works for: “They are very flexible with whatever you would like to do in terms of how you’d like to approach the work.”

For some others it is difficult to relocate as they are well established in the life, so they prefer to remain in that present situation. Thus, it can be seen from the above excerpts that for the participants who decided to continue on the same career pathway, again the influencing factors of self, family, organisation, and environment have played a major role in orientating toward their career.

As discussed earlier, people generally have more than a single job over a lifetime. Indeed, two-thirds of the participants (24) have navigated their career away from their initial pathway, branching off to a new one, sometimes several times in their career. As noted earlier, Halls (1976) described this as “protean career”, when people reinvent themselves and create new pathways. The following section explores this journey in detail outlining the different reasons and aspirations for this reinvention of self.

### 4.3.3 Navigational change: Re-conceptualising the career pathway

Navigational change happened when the participants altered their previous career pathway. A common theme was that the participants were dissatisfied, and this dissatisfaction led to exploration and new discoveries. This was done via taking up a job unrelated to the previous sector, or in some cases relocating to a new place. This happened because, as discussed in Chapter 2, certain issues predominated at different points in the life span, one parameter usually taking centre stage, with the remaining parameters active but taking on a secondary role at that time. Moreover, it has been observed that people use different standards to evaluate their experiences and attainments.

Table 4.6 presents information about people who navigated and who did not. A majority of the participants (24) exemplified Super’s “conventional” career pattern (1980), exploring at least one alternative vocational path prior to embarking on another career. They changed track only after determining through first-hand experience that their personal values, needs and abilities were simply not well-suited to that particular work environment. For example, George shifted to academia from
working in a firm. He expressed his discomfort, saying “I wasn’t really enjoying the pressure of the job, you’ve got to account for every hour of your day, and clients... So I didn’t really enjoy that so much.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Navigational change (n = 24)</th>
<th>No navigational change (n = 12)</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academia</td>
<td>Firms</td>
<td>Academia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is important to note that the navigational changers (24) were either childless or not married at the time of the change, and those who were married had a spouse who fully supported the change. Therefore, it was likely that they did not have the distraction of dealing with balancing family responsibilities, and could therefore focus more intently on the career shift. For example, Robert was not very happy about his government job. He was looking for a new avenue and a chat with his friend who was going to join a new firm, started him on the track. “We played golf a couple of times, I took annual leave and went golfing, and the more we talked about what he was going to do at [the new firm] it just sounded amazing, and I remember going home and saying to my wife, this is a real opportunity and if I don’t leave the public service now, I will never get out.” His wife said, “Do whatever it takes.” Thus, with her support and his connections, he made the move and is highly satisfied with the new career.

Of the 15 academic participants, only two had entered academia as their initial career, and they have continued on the same pathway, whereas the other 13 had navigated to academia – seven from firms and six from other sectors. The participants from firms (21) are almost equally split between those who navigated (11) and those who did not (10).

The textual analysis revealed that the navigational change was perceived by the participants in a variety of ways. Five categories were identified, though with an understanding that there may be an overlap between reasons for navigating to a different path. Some participants, for example, explored a new pathway by relocating but also did this for the sake of the family. The following subsections explain each of the five identified categories.

**Exploring a new pathway**

Many of the participants navigated primarily because they were not satisfied with their career and wanted to explore a new pathway. They changed sectors, either from firms to academia, or from government to the commercial sector. As stated previously, most academic participants (7 out of 15)
redirected their career path to academia after an exposure to accounting firm experience. They changed mainly through a strong desire/need for autonomy and independence, the fact that they did not like the “clocking-in clocking-out” system in the firm, the pressure of the job, or lower time and job flexibility in firms as compared to academia.

Albert switched from a firm to academia reasoning, “I don’t like clocking in basically. You do accept a lower salary and a lower standard of living in an academic world, but then again I’ve got lot more freedom.” Sarah described her chance entry into academia as she was invited for a series of lectures, and recognized ‘lack of fit’ within the firm environment. Whereas Ruth changed from another faculty in the university to accounting academia as, “So one critical issue, one critical point in my career was not being able to get post doc work [in her previous faculty].”

Two participants were in accounting related jobs in the government sector, they both shifted to firms for exploring a new pathway. One decided to switch as, “I think probably the biggest drawback for my career path is that the level of my salary didn’t grow as quickly.” For the other one it was, “… that’s a bureaucratic nightmare, and it got to a point where I felt I could not go any further in [the government organisation], and there were more opportunities in the commercial sector.”

**Relocation**

Eleven participants relocated for mainly personal, family and professional reasons. Some of the representative examples are illustrated below.

When Daniel left New Zealand, he had not planned to come back. “In fact I lived in the UK for eight years, my New Zealand passport lapsed, and I literally was never going to come back.” But then, “Basically a few things happened, I suppose it’s again there were externalities. Our main client over there was taken over by [a big company] and so we lost 80% of our business overnight... Then a couple of planes flew into buildings in New York which completely dismantled the industry in the UK. At the same time there was a tax change made over there, which meant that it was a lot less advantageous to work in IT…” These changes coupled with the fact that, “The kids, the smallest one got to seven, and New Zealand is a much better place to bring up the kids than the UK, so it was just time to come home. So I went and renewed my passport and came back to New Zealand.”

George relocated as, “I think I just didn’t feel challenged any more, kind of felt that... I thought there was no future there really.” Quite a few relocated for the family reasons, for example, Laura – “We had two small children then...and we didn’t have any family that lived near there and my parents had been there, but they had bought a dairy farm in city X and they shifted here a few years before that along with lots of other farmers. They moved down here, then we thought...we wanted to be close to them.”
Ruth relocated for a combination of personal, professional and family reasons, “I was teaching part time in University X, and I could have applied for a job in X as a lecturer, but the reasons for wanting to live in [city Y] were partly my parents and partly I didn’t like X department. I didn’t want to teach in X and I didn’t like living in that city. I wanted to be in the city [where my parents were], so my children got to know their grandparents a bit better.”

**Change of sector due to family considerations**

Some participants, mostly women, changed the sector primarily for family reasons. Sarah changed from a firm to academia, “I wasn’t happy with stresses on my family and in the position I was in, I had responsibility… you just have to do it, you cannot make the excuse I am sorry, my child was sick, because that would not be acceptable in a male environment. There was less pressure in academia, and a little more flexibility. For example, if there were essays to mark or assignments, it’s possible to take them home. And so it suited my circumstances so much better, it was certainly a step down in terms of starting back at the bottom.”

Similarly, Mary decided to change her line of work to academia as, “You could work from home, or you could take time off, and go and see the children at sport or do reading, but you could, you just worked late or you worked at the weekends…to catch the time up. So it was probably that balancing the kids.” A few male participants also considered their family for changing the sector, for example, Albert who shifted from firm to academia, “Well I suppose to some extent moving into education there was an issue there about not wanting to have a job that was sort of totally taking you out of the family.”

**Crisis**

A number of participants were almost forced to take a navigational decision because of critical incidents in their lives, thereby turning a challenge into a new opportunity. A personal crisis led Amanda on a new pathway, “Just the kind of things happened in my life that I got to this point where, it was just a turning point really… I had split up with a boyfriend and I was really focusing on myself, where I wanted to go…” Whereas Scott faced a professional crisis and he had to start on a new track, “I ended up in a situation where I had an employee working for me, who was stealing money from clients. There was a lot of downtime and I ended up…it cost me quite a lot of cash. So I sold my practice to [a bigger firm], and took a position within the same firm.”

**Education at a later stage**

Eleven participants had studied later in life after a series of jobs. For them it was a deliberate decision to equip themselves with knowledge and qualification, in order to create a new pathway. Out of these, eight participants had already decided that they wanted to pursue the accounting practitioner pathway and they joined the university with that intention.
Nathan joined the university when he realized that, “Practical experience does not count, there is an expectation that you have to prove yourself scholastically or academically. I have ambitions of making a partner here, so I need to be qualified.” Similarly Daniel figured that, “I needed to give myself an injection of credibility; I didn’t want to start at the bottom. So I thought by doing masters I will arm myself with knowledge, and then that combined with my commercial expertise hopefully, and someone will give me a break.”

Virginia did it back to front, she had the practical experience from her previous job, “So I actually ended up doing a lot of the accounting paperwork, and foreman’s reporting and all that, and then when they were making people redundant, I basically took the money and went off to university to actually get that formal part of the job that I’d been doing.”

For the remaining three participants, the pathway of an academic evolved while studying at the university. Sue did not have a particular career goal in mind, “So I just came to university because I was interested in the subject and just to prove something to myself.” Then she worked toward becoming an academic when she realised they were short staffed and there were further career opportunities.

4.3.4 Future goals

When quizzed about their future plans, almost all participants seemed to have developed better career clarity than they had in the initial days. Most of them wished to continue on the same track; some because they are happy with the way their career had shaped up, whereas others want to maintain status quo as they are aware that navigational change is not feasible at this stage, having invested time and efforts over the years.

Status quo

Status quo is understood as the general state of things, the combination of circumstances at a given time. In particular, it is assumed here when participants are unwilling to change despite their dissatisfaction. At the current stage of their career, some participants reported they are not happy about the way their career has shaped up, and are aware that they need to make a career change, but also realise that sometimes navigational change is not possible.

Most of the academics began their career before the PBRF regime, and now they ruefully notice the reduced academic freedom, greater interference of management about the research outputs, and the compulsion of producing research to satisfy the PBRF criteria. But they do not wish to change

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17 PBRF is the performance based research fund in New Zealand; it assesses the research performance of tertiary institutions and funds them on that basis. For more information, see section 2.4.4.
their career track now, as they are aware of the low transferability of job skills from academia to the corporate sector or firms.

James pondered about changing the sector, “It’s too big a decision to change your mind, so there is a certain degree of ‘you’ve made your bed now lie in it’.” Nathan is aware that, “If I go somewhere else I have got to work really hard to build that back up again, and there is probably not a premium big enough that they could pay to make me give that up... and I don’t know whether I will get the level of stimulation that I’d like, and I don’t think I will get the variety of work either.”

Carol is not very satisfied in her current job, but she has not considered a career change as, “Not really, no, my husband is in a quite a good job here. If he left his job, he would probably find it difficult to transfer his skills somewhere else, and receive the same sort of salary that he is on. So no, we haven’t really thought about going anywhere, we have got family ties here, elderly relatives and stuff...”

**Participants who want to grow laterally**

There are a number of participants who are not seeking vertical growth, but want to grow laterally. Out of these, eleven participants have already reached the top of the career ladder within their firm as a partner. If they wanted to progress they can take up a bigger role at a national level or start a firm of their own, but they seem to have different goals which are more personal or broader in nature. For most participants, family no longer seems to play an influential role as it played in the earlier years, probably as most of them have older children who are independent and not a responsibility any more. The following accounts reveal the future plans of the participants who are at the top level in their organisations.

George shared, “I don’t want to become a manager or administrator, that’s not my aim. I’d rather step down a bit and do something else. I have got no further ambitions. I am very concerned a lot the last few years about how you can... you know the work just takes over everything.” Some of the accounting practitioners want to expand the horizon by extending themselves out of the firm. For example, Nancy, “I would like to probably move into the role of a professional director.” Similarly Robert, “...maybe that’s where I will get to when I get a little bit older... I will evolve into a consultant.”

Daniel who spent a few years of his childhood in South Asia has plans to go back: “In five years’ time; all my kids will finish school, so that doesn’t tie me to a city anymore. I’d quite like to go... maybe go back to South East Asia or something and be a partner there, maybe one of the developing countries over there... somewhere out there where you can sort of introduce some of what it needs to be a partner to a new practice.”
It is notable that none of the participants who are working as accounting practitioners want to start their own practice, which can be a possible way to progress for them. They feel very well supported by the firm and are happy to enjoy the variety of work and the wide exposure at the international level. For example, Cheryl, “I prefer the environment that I am in here to starting one myself. I prefer the people, the group, and the opportunities that you have got nationally rather than starting by myself.”

There are other participants who have not reached the top, but they have no desire to do so. They wish to maintain their present position and grow laterally. These participants have no desire to reach the top or even to step up to the next level. The main reasons being either they realistically do not see any opportunity for advancement, or they need stability rather than growth, or are aiming for a better work-life balance. For example, Sally shared, “I am not a person that is totally besotted with that [the title]........with that thing. I don’t need that to make me feel good, and I do not need, I don’t need the extra money... I just think there are more important things in life than money.”

Amanda is aware of the reality, “I don’t really want to go further up the ladder... because to stay in this kind of firm the next level you really have to sort of more buy into the business, I needed to do that 10 years ago really if I wanted to do that.” So she has future plans of, “I would rather go more sideways and more just have a job that’s actually less hours, probably next few years. I’d rather have a job where I worked 30 hours a week.”

It is interesting to note that some of the female participants have opportunities to reach the top or perform bigger roles, but contrary to some prevailing opinions about glass ceiling and barriers to women reaching the top, they are quite happy to be at the same level, and choose to enjoy the work-life balance it provides them. As their comments represent, it is also possible that the decision-making process is driven by the fact that the male “corpocratic” model’s demands do not suit the circumstances of female participants in terms of fulfilling family responsibilities as well as it suits their male counterparts. For example, Carol’s goal is not to be a partner, “… because I see how the partners here just devote their life to their job pretty much and that’s not me, because I have to balance that still with my family.”

Alice has plans of starting her family, she shared that, “I will probably say I will still be a manager... in 5-10 years I will probably have a family, but hopefully still be doing the same thing I do at work.” Yvonne reasoned, “One reason is I think I am happy where I am, I don’t feel the need to financially or career wise that I want to go any further...probably the other reason is that I don’t think in this environment that I could, you know from a business case perspective, the number of partners, and I

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18 See section 2.4.2: Corpocratic is a process of linear, hierarchical progression (O’Leary, 1997)
think that in my working lifetime I don’t think I will be able to get there.” So she has formulated a goal accordingly, “Yes, doing the same job, same organisation, and potentially less hours ... maybe dropping a day would be quite nice, just to have more ‘me’ time, be around with teenagers...” These comments confirm the finding of a study in the literature review about how the refusal of promotion to a managerial level contributed to women’s well-being.

Participants who want vertical growth
About half of the participants (16) wish to climb higher up the ladder. Some want to reach the top, for example James shared, “There is only one more step for me and that is going to a full equity partner role” Some are happy to climb only one more step up the ladder. Michael has just started his academic career at a later stage in his life after a series of other jobs, and is very happy to have finally answered his calling and made it in academia. Though currently he is at a lower position, he is highly satisfied and has an ambition of stepping just a level up. He said, “If I ended up becoming a senior lecturer and retiring, I’d be very happy.”

There are some who are happy at their current level, but they do see themselves eventually reaching the top. For example, Cheryl shared, “The next step is a director, and after that as a partner. But at this point in my life I don’t aspire to be either of those. I am happy where I am at the moment.” Similarly Sue, “I am just very happy just to keep stepping up, so hopefully before I retire I’d become a professor.” Similarly, Virginia has ambitions of reaching the top, “I want to have that title on the door”, but not now as she shared, “But I think is being an associate professor in the next three years actually that important? I’ve got a nice house, my husband is happy, my son is happy, he is still at high school, and I basically get paid what an associate professor gets paid.”

The above comments demonstrate that there is no single representative view of a career, and that people have very different career goals. Though at present all participants work as accounting professionals – in mainstream firms or in universities – their pathways have been quite different since they embarked on their careers. Even when they have similar professional profiles, marked differences were found in the career pathways and experiences the participants related. The career focus displayed by the participants which determines the pathways is illustrated below.

4.4. Career Focus

As stated in Chapter 2, career orientation is understood as the extent to which one feels directed towards one’s career. It is a result of the attitude toward and degree of strength with which one invests in the pursuit of their work. Consequently, career goals and thereby patterns are largely determined by decisions which stem from that orientation. For example, one of the important indications of the career orientation can be career flow – that is, the degree to which one’s career
has continued in an unbroken and smoothly running path. Was it interrupted or was it a steady succession of positions along the pathway? In order to investigate how people acted to modify their career directions, the decisions of the participants were studied with regard to flow. Table 4.7 presents information about male and female participants’ career flow.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4-7 Career flow of the participants</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Out of these three women, one is single and the other two do not have children.

It is notable that the pattern of the career flow in the sample is exactly reversed with regard to gender. Further exploration revealed that of the 18 participants who interrupted their career flow, all three male participants did so to pursue further education for enhancing career opportunities. Only one female participant out of the fifteen took a break for education, and she did not have any family responsibilities at the time. The remaining female participants (n = 14) interrupted their career because of family responsibilities. For most of them this meant childcare. Though they are in full-time employment at the time of research, in the past they all either took a break in employment, went part time, or started their career after their children were older. This clearly indicates the difference in the career orientations of male and female participants – females emphasised their childcare responsibilities over careers. The following discussion uses this information as well as other inputs from the interviews to determine the career orientation of the participants.

At this point, it is useful to revisit the discussion presented in the Literature review. The findings in Table 4.7 align with the discussion on female career patterns wherein the different orientations identified by several researchers with regard to career patterns of men and women (section 2.4.2) were identified. Recall that the discussion yielded three predominant patterns: focus on family, focus on career, and focus on career and family.

In this research, all of the participants are working professionals. Hence, none of them are purely home-centred, and therefore, they do not accurately fit into the first category above. With regard to the second category, further analysis revealed that no one had a “focus on career alone”. They all had a “focus on career and family” attitude that exhibited a variety of patterns. There was an element of family consideration to a lesser or a greater degree, but all participants described a balance of sorts between the two pulls.

Moreover, the focus was not found to be equal, but it was situational, dynamic, and adapted to suit the demands of the individual’s circumstances. In fact, it can be described as a continuum wherein
the career focus kept shifting with changes in life stage, family situation, and other responsibilities and priorities; illustrated in Figure 4.3:

![Career focus diagram](image)

**Figure 4-3 Career focus**

Specifically, it is the middle portion (greyed out) that covers the career preferences of the participants accurately, where all participants – married and unmarried, male and female, have taken decisions considering their family. For example, participants with elderly parents shared that some have shifted to be near them or some have decided not to go overseas for better career opportunities because they want to be near them. Children are a major factor in the career decision-making process. Many participants have adjusted their career focus so that they can look after their children in a better way. Most female participants are on the middle right of the continuum, prioritising family; and a majority of male participants are towards the middle left of the continuum.

1. **Adaptive focus on career and family**: adapting the career decisions according to the family circumstances, trying to balance both.

   For example: Keith, “I spend a lot less time at work, but that time has just gone into I suppose a very functional role in the sense of preparing meals, and changing diapers and all of those things that go into raising a person, looking after our baby.”

2. **Greater focus on career than family**: where participants had primarily focussed on career, and the family was considered, but was secondary.

   For example: Sam is aware of work being his first priority, and he and his family are also aware of the trade-off, “But equally too we have the lifestyle we have because of the work I do, so the kids and my wife are really supportive of that.”

On the basis of this classification, the textual analysis generated the following table that presents information about the career focus of the participants at present. It must be noted that career decisions are dynamic and the orientation reflected here is determined by their present situation, which is why it is termed as “current career orientation”. Table 4.8 clearly shows the different orientations of male and female participants. In fact, as in Table 4.7, the pattern is reversed with regard to gender. Further investigation revealed the thought processes, understandings and negotiations between couples that has led to these two main patterns of career focus, further clarified in the following two sections.
### Table 4-8  Current career focus of the participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Adaptive focus on career and family</th>
<th>Greater focus on career than family</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 4.4.1 Adaptive focus on career and family

Research points to the career first attitude of men which is confirmed by this research, but it also reveals that they do so only because they have supportive wives. When they do not have that support because their wives are career oriented or because of separation/divorce, they have adapted similar patterns to women, that of giving priority to family as well.

As can be seen from Table 4.8 above, only four male participants were judged to have an adaptive focus on career and family. For the three, the main reason they adapt is that they had separated from their wife a few years before and therefore had to shift their career focus. They can no longer focus exclusively on their career like they used to. They must now accommodate their responsibilities to their children, since they have sole care of them on a “one-week-on, one-week-off” basis. Daniel explained that his focus had been different before his separation, “I was probably more the traditional, misogynistic, [my marital relationship] very much… it fell on the traditional lines, that my career came first, and in terms of responsibility… my wife would do that.” After the separation, he had to shift his focus,

> Well, I have joint custody of the kids, so basically… so this week is not my week so I can work longer, and when I do have the kids, that means I have to get up, get them up, get them breakfast, make their lunches… deal with moody teenagers in the morning, and get back in home for dinner.

Similarly, Ryan adjusted his work schedule to suit his changed circumstances — “The responsibility of my children has definitely been [substantial] for the past six years, since the separation, so it’s a huge impact. So I have them every second week, my life is really quite full-on.” Separation has affected Martin as well, and he does not want to plan career progression now. He notes that – “…at the moment I am still trying to get back my [personal] life back in order, and with two daughters still fairly financially dependent… I just feel I have got enough without thinking about that.”

The fourth participant, Keith, seems to be the only one in the male group who has willingly adopted the adaptive approach. His wife is in full time employment, and he is happy to manage both his academic work and family fronts.
This job is more flexible than her job, so I mean I can [adapt]. As long as the work gets done, and I have done the classes, and did the lectures and I do the marking, then it doesn’t really matter when I am here, so I can pick her [their baby daughter] up or be late or whatever, you can be flexible.

The fourteen female participants who have an adaptive focus on family and career either took a break in employment when their children were young, or started their career after the children were grown up. For example, Carol stated that, “I started my family, and then I did actually resign...” Other participants shifted their focus once the children were older. Mary noted, “I have studied later, after I have had my children because I wanted a better position... and a career.” Sally admitted that, “I cannot be singly focussed on just working, and I don’t want to be. I want to be a good mother too, and a good wife.”

The female participants seem to manage their work after fulfilling family responsibilities, affirming their family focus to varying degrees. Angela is on the other side of the continuum with a much greater focus on family – “I think I do balance my life well. I think probably to the detriment of my career path. On the whole I have made a point of trying to work it around my family.” Jane manages her work-family balance by re-organising her day – “Now I leave here [the office] at 2.45, and then till 7.30 it’s family time. I take my daughters to her classes, I pick my son up from school, and then from 7.30 onwards however much work I have got to do, I do.”

Some of these female participants have now reached the top position in their organisations, but they preferred not to take up these larger roles until their children were grown. Sharon said –

I was working in that pseudo partner role for quite a long time, particularly the time I was having the children, and having bits of time off for parental leave and the like and working part time. I didn’t really feel like I could go to for partnership while the children were very young.

Nancy gave up her thriving practice when she realised that she preferred to emphasise her mother role – “So my son, 12 going on 13, he was my primary reason for selling [the accounting practice] to make sure I would be available for him.” She sold her practice to a bigger firm and opted to become a partner with them. It is important to note that both Sharon and Nancy have a supportive spouse, and had hired maids to help with childcare and household work.

4.4.2 Greater focus on career

As discussed in the literature review chapter, it is not unusual to see men focus more on their career. All male participants that belong to this category confirm the traditional male career pattern,
possibly because, as one of the female participants put it, “They have their wives or their partners to look after their children, so they can stay in here and work for long hours.”

Further analysis revealed that of the fourteen male participants, one is single; two do not have children and the remaining eleven have a supportive stay-at-home or part-time working wife taking care of the family responsibilities. For example, Roger could focus on his career because, “She [his wife] stopped working... and almost recently just this year, in January, went back to work, full time now. She had fourteen years out of the workforce, yes, but she’s back now...” Robert acknowledges the support from his wife so that he can focus on his career more. He said “My wife didn’t want to work full time because the children were young, and so she did a part time job at a school.”

As noted earlier, the focus of this group was not entirely on career, as in some way the participants seem to have taken career decisions considering the family situation too. For example, though Philip’s major focus is on career, he considers his family as well while taking career decisions. He does not wish to go abroad seeking further opportunities, as he said, “Especially as your parents get older as well, you want to spend time with them, and make sure you are not too far away.” Nathan’s greater focus is his career, but he makes sure he fulfills the family responsibilities, “I get up in the mornings, I come into work, and I am probably here [at work] by 5.45am... I do try to get home during the week so that I can have dinner with the kids, bathe them or read them a book, put them to bed, and stuff like that.”

With regard to the four female participants with a greater focus on career, one is single, the other two are in their 30s and do not have children, and the fourth one has a stay-at-home partner. Cheryl is very clear about her goals. “My husband would like to have children, but at the moment I am focussed on my career, so I have no plans for having children in near future.” Whereas Virginia could focus on career as, “I was back to work in 6 weeks. My husband is not in paid work, so he’s brought him [their son] up.”

It seemed that certain personal decisions made by women with a focus on career may have had a wider impact on work and family life. Mandy did not have her children particularly early and she was very keen on her career. Then, when she later decided to have children, it was not easy. “I remember I literally stopped work one day because I didn’t feel very well, and went into a hospital and had her [daughter]. I wasn’t even 7 months pregnant. She is very premature.” Mandy’s comments in general about career-oriented women are quite telling, “I remember thinking at the time... of the women at my firm who were reasonably in senior roles, something ridiculous, like 90% of them had premature babies, and there were lots of women who did not have any children.”
It can be seen from their accounts that female participants’ career orientation is determined primarily by their parental status and their thinking around care-giving. Thus, out of the 36, for the thirty married participants with children, family responsibilities in terms of number and age of children, other dependents and spousal support were found to be the major factors in deciding their career focus. Additionally, participants’ career aspirations also influenced their decisions. Couples’ working arrangements appeared to have been a complex interplay of the economic ability, aspirations, and communication between the couples powerfully determined by women’s level of education and their drive for success. For example, Virginia recalled her discussion with her husband, “We sat down and we had a wee bit of discussion about this, and I couldn’t give up the job at that time, as even at that point I was earning 20,000 a year more than he was.” She also mentioned how her drive played a part. “Oh, yes, very much so. That went into the discussion too. I’m far more ambitious than he ever will be, or ever has been.”

To summarise, age, education, marital and parental status, family responsibilities, economic considerations, spousal support, and last but not the least individual aspirations and clarity about their career goals seemed to play a major role in forming career orientation. As a consequence, these orientations influence career-related decisions and determine the focus.

The foregoing discussion has elaborated on the process of forming career pathways of the participants. It can be observed that self, family, organisation, and environment have played an important role in making career decisions; this is explored in greater detail in the next section. As stated earlier, “self” will be elaborated in the next chapter on career crafting.

4.5. The role of family

In hitherto discussion it can be observed that an individual’s family of orientation and family of procreation acted as major foundations of career development, particularly influencing a person’s career orientation and pathway. Families mean responsibilities as well as support, thereby, sometimes acting as a limiting or a conducive factor.

As noted previously, positive relationships have been observed between social support received from a family member and career success. This was confirmed by the textual analysis of the participants’ interviews. Family of orientation typically played an important role in early career development, and family of procreation, particularly spousal support with childcare and household work emerged as pivotal with regard to current career management as discussed in the following sections.
4.5.1 Family of orientation

Participants’ accounts revealed that family of orientation’s support included general and specific support. General support was offering encouragement and backing the career choice but not necessarily providing a direction or constructive support; and specific support was constructively guiding, creating and providing learning experiences facilitating specific career goals.

Only four participants seemed to have benefitted from a high level of general and specific support. Cheryl, for example, had exceptional support from her family and this contributed to her forming her career goal by the age of ten. She recalled, “I had an obsession with money and I loved counting money and doing all that sort of stuff. So my father said you should be an accountant.” Her parents were proactive about introducing her to the practical world, “Those meetings that I always went to with my parents were always about tax, and looking at their financial statements. So mum and dad used to sit down and explain things in the financial statements to me, so that’s why I took an interest.” James also valued advice that came from home, especially in his initial career building period, “Dad’s quite a bit of a sounding board, he held a reasonably high managerial position in an organisation.”

Mandy was going to do fine arts, but, “I couldn’t go away to university because of how sick I was and I had to do a few papers and see how I went, for that first year at university. It was dad who put the seed of accounting in my head, he really convinced me that that would be a really general degree that would have wide applications that would be really useful.” She followed the advice and is a highly successful accountant today.

Jane also developed her goal early, but she only had general support in terms of, “My mum was a book keeper so if she brought work home, I would see her doing reconciliations, doing the family budget, and things like that.” But she did not have the specific support; in fact she remembers when she chose accounting in the sixth form, “Mum and dad also made me take shorthand typing because they thought I could always get a job with those skills. So they allowed me to do the accounting with shorthand typing.” Virginia never considered accounting as a career because, “It was just not in my family psyche, so no, I sort of knew about that, but I did have a perception that they are all sort of middle aged men who are really boring, that’s all I knew, and I’m sure it still hasn’t changed.”

A few participants had low or negative support, which led to a hazy career goal. For example, Keith commented, “The family business, it was such a big weight, there was this big expectation that I was going to do it, and I was kind of very narrow in my thinking in terms of what else I am going to do?” Similarly Michael did not feel supported, “My parents, there was always a lot of tension at home and ultimately my parents separated, and divorced. So the way things were at home I thought I really
wanted to get out, and the only way to really do that was to start work. So I actually quit high school…”

Thus, the participants who received high general as well as specific support were rated highest on the support scale, those who had high general but no specific support were rated at the medium level, and others with lesser support were rated accordingly. The information on the level of family support and clarity of the initial career goal is presented in a table in Appendix N.

As well as the important role that can be played by family in forming initial career goals, with regard to current career management, family of orientation can matter especially by offering childcare support. Wider family support in terms of good relationships with grandparents, their proximity, as well as their willingness and ability to help seems to be important in managing personal and professional fronts. However, not everyone is able to get the required support, only six participants mentioned grandparental support. Sue acknowledged it as, “My parents were very good when I was a student, and in the early days of teaching they would come and look after the kids if I had an early lecture, or my dad would pick up the kids from school and bike home with them.” Elderly parents means support as well as responsibilities. Out of the 36 participants, only two participants (1 male and 1 female) reported to have current elderly dependents, in both cases their career decisions are influenced by the responsibility of looking after them.

### 4.5.2 Family of procreation

Though this study is primarily about 36 participants and their career journey, it really involves 70 people, two participants who are single, and 34 married participants plus their partners. Again and again participants reported that the career focus majorly depended on their family-work arrangements with the partner and other support. Sally, whose husband is the primary care-giver, explained it clearly. According to her, to be able to have a full-time career, “Well, you either have less children or you have a supportive spouse or you buy a nanny, or you have got parents around.” The following representative comments illustrate the high and low level of spousal support received by the participants.

Nathan went back to university to complete his degree, he acknowledged high support, “If she [his wife] hadn’t supported me through university, I wouldn’t be here now; full stop, end of story”. Now she has gone back to being the primary care-giver as he is back in the work force. Similarly, complete support from her husband meant Virginia could continue working – “I was back to work in six weeks. My husband is not in paid work, so he’s brought him [their son] up.”

In contrast, Martin had separated a few months ago before the interview and did not want to plan his future career, “… at the moment I am still trying to get my [personal] life back in order, and with
two daughters still fairly financially dependent I just feel I have got enough without thinking about that.” The following sections highlight the role played by the family of procreation in career related decisions and outcomes.

**Important others**

When asked about important others in their lives, almost everyone said family – mainly partner and children were the most important. The following comments describe the value of the support:

Jane: “My husband is very supportive of anything that I like to do; he is always encouraging me to do if I want to do more.”
Yvonne: “Obviously my husband, because he is the one that’s picked up the slack at home, in terms of children.”
Amanda: “Obviously my husband, your partner is pretty crucial.”
Angela: “Obviously my husband”
Cheryl: “My husband obviously”
Mary: “Absolutely, absolutely. In my PhD he was the most important, because you can’t do it without that when I was studying, he was always there.”

Male participants also mentioned the important role played by their partner:

Arthur: “Obviously, my wife, my three kids, I talk to them about career and obviously they are very important.”
Keith: “My wife is interested in what I am doing, and we do talk about things.”
Robert: “I guess family is really important. In my life I have made career decisions where I have put family first.”
Roger: “My wife, in terms of good advice, kind of good grounding...”

Thus, according to the participants’ accounts, spouses constituted one of the important supports for career progression and work-life balance. It was confirmed that this support is critical for working individuals as it provides a sense of stability at home, help with child care, and alleviates work-life conflict; as explained below.

**Spousal support**

With regard to career expectations and parenting, the latest survey by Harvard Business School on the experience of its alumni across career, family and life paths revealed that more women had experienced career interruptions than they expected compared to that of men (Life and leadership after HBS, 2015). While 25 per cent of women had expected to interrupt their careers for parenting, nearly twice as many had done so. Men’s realities, on the other hand, followed what they had
anticipated. Moreover, women were much more likely to make career changes to address work-family conflict.

The participants in this research exhibited a similar pattern. As stated earlier, with the exception of one, all female participants with children took a break in employment or went part time when their children were young. Some found it difficult to accept the unforeseen family responsibilities in part because this had not been well-thought out by them, as Mandy shared, “I think that’s the other thing you don’t know when you get married, do you? You don’t know what your husband is going to be like around children. How they’re going to be in there and bring them up.” Similarly, Sarah pondered, “I didn’t think of the consequences to myself, when you are two single people, you don’t realise what happens when you’ve children. And that, of course somebody has to be responsible all the time…”

Male participants in contrast, could focus on their career as they had expected. James’s expectations were met, for example, and he could concentrate on his career – “She [his wife] did part time after the first one and then didn’t work... went back for a few weeks after the year, and had the second one, had a year off, went back for a few weeks and then we pulled the pin, for six years... and then dipped her toes back into part time work and then now the kids are those ages, they are pretty self-sufficient. So she works school hours now, so nine to half past two-three o’clock, still around after school... for me it works perfectly.”

Spousal support works at different levels; to reiterate, the various spousal support categories identified in Chapter 2 (section 2.3.2) were: emotional support, esteem support, career support, help with children, household help, and overall support that included partner’s career and lifestyle choices.

It was identified from the participants’ accounts that partner’s work and lifestyle choices were most important for career decisions, as a part-time working or stay-at-home spouse facilitated household help as well as help with children which led to career progression. It was also realized that the remaining three categories, emotional support, esteem support and career support acted effectively together. So the above six categories were revised to two, viz., partner’s work and lifestyle choices, and personal support, to illustrate spousal support.

1. **Partner’s work and lifestyle choices**

The working status of one’s partner is an indicator of the level of support offered by one to the other with regard to career. For example, participants who had partners as primary care givers for their children, could maintain a greater focus on their career. Table 4.9 highlights the working status of the spouse and the support offered based on the textual inputs. Total support indicates that the spouse...
is the primary care-giver and relieves the partner of any household responsibilities, whereas partial support indicates sharing of responsibilities.

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<td>Total</td>
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*married participants with children

It is evident from the above table that having a stay-at-home or a part-time working husband does not seem to work the same way for the female participants as it works for their male colleagues. Unlike the male counterparts, even with a stay-at-home partner, they seem to share the responsibilities which results in them not being able to fully focus on their career. Sally shared, “…having three children and a full time career is quite hard so invariably, almost invariably most women take a larger role in...organising the kids, not being with them, but knowing, keeping tabs on what’s going on…” Similarly Virginia said, “Even with him [husband] at home, there are still things...it doesn’t shift all the work to him. There’s still things that only mums can do. And he gets sick of doing things too, so…” Likewise, Yvonne does not feel completely free of the responsibilities; however they have worked out a nice routine, “My husband cooks, he cooks during the week, and then I take over at the weekend. And then like the laundry, I do the laundry in the morning; my husband brings it in and folds it.”

None of the male participants who have a housewife or a part-time working wife, seemed to have a similar sense of responsibility. James stated, “She starts at nine, so she gets them off to school, and is there for them after school to do the after school things, and I’m home by 6 o’clock, it’s all done... so that works quite well.” Thus, with regard to the work status and family responsibility arrangements between the couples, two specific patterns were identified as follows.

**Traditional male breadwinner**

According to this traditional paradigm, the wife was the primary carer giver and offered full support to the male income earner. Of the fifteen married male participants, ten had a supportive stay-at-home partner, and they expressed how it has helped them in their career. Sam shared, “She works full time at home; we have three children under five.” Roger acknowledged, “She stopped working, and almost recently just this year, in January went back to work, full time now. She had 14 years out of the workforce, yes, but she’s back now...”
Role reversal

In contrast, following another pattern that has developed in the recent years, the husband may stay at home or work part-time and is the primary care giver. Of the fifteen married female participants with children, six women have husbands who belong to this category. Evidently, the cohort is different from the wider population – women are more educated, better qualified, and economically more competent than their partners. These couples seem to have made some movement toward greater sharing of childcare and household labour responsibilities.

The traditional pattern is reversed here; while these women worked full time, their husbands gave support in terms of taking care of the house when children were younger, and some have gone back to working part-time now. For all of these participants it was a rational, emotional as well as economic decision, as the following representative sentiments illustrate:

Yvonne shared, “Eventually in terms of salary, I was getting higher than him, so it made sense to me, and I wanted to go and work fulltime, and he was quite happy to reduce his hours and go part time, so we did a bit of a role reversal, which was good.” In fact, the name for this pattern was derived from the above comment where Yvonne described the arrangements with her husband. (This demonstrates the collaborative aspect of qualitative research discussed in Chapter 3.)

Laura commented, “My husband wasn’t working at the time because he was looking after the kids and I was working.” Complete support from husband meant Virginia could — “I was back to work in 6 weeks. My husband is not in paid work, so he’s brought him [their son] up.” This arrangement was possible because Virginia knew that, “If I had to stay at home I would be probably very frustrated”, and it also made sense as she was earning more than him and he was happy to swap the roles.

Sharon’s husband opted out of the workforce as they jointly decided: “We just didn’t feel like we could sustain two careers and bring up three children at the same time. I have to give him credit for that; that was really a major part of the support for me being able to have done what I have done. I am not sure that had he been a big career person as well, I necessarily would have quite taken the same path.”

2. Personal support

As per the earlier discussion, it is also important to have personal support which includes emotional, esteem and career support. Having just one type of support, i.e. partner’s work and lifestyle choice, does not help all the way, as one of the participants shared whose husband works part-time. Amanda felt constrained as, “My husband, he doesn’t really like me getting too late home. I get a bit of a negative feedback if I muck around too long at work, and get home late, he doesn’t like that. So I do have to kind of consider him as well, because he is kind of running the house a bit more.”
On the other hand, even if the partner’s career choices dictate that he cannot be a primary care giver, still the personal support is invaluable. For example, Mandy’s partner has a good understanding of her needs, she shared, “I was so miserable at home just changing nappies, and my husband could see, actually everybody was miserable, because I was miserable and that kind of permeated the whole family. He went, ‘Actually you’ve got to be at work’.” They both juggle to balance their professional life while fulfilling family responsibilities.

The male participants also acknowledged the importance of personal support. James acknowledged the support in these words, “In adverse times the hours get a bit long, and I get a bit stressed so she [wife] is quite good in calming, that sort and does a whole lot of other stuff, so I don’t have to worry about.” When Arthur wished to change his career track by shifting to academia from firm, his stay-at-home wife’s support was fundamental as it meant financial compromises. He appreciated, “My salary dropped from 57,000 to 42,000, and so we went from having a quite nice modern car to having a car that was twenty years old. But she was very supportive, and I think she could see that I was happier to be on the academic side.”

Thus, family of orientation and family of procreation seemed to have played major roles in forming of the participants’ initial career pathways and later career development, respectively. As identified earlier, organisations are also an integral influence, the following discussion therefore highlights their important role in career decisions and progression.

4.6. The role of organisation

It was documented from the participants’ accounts that organisations played an important role in the different phases of their careers in two principal ways. In terms of initial career decisions schools played a key role in facilitating exploration of interests by providing a wide choice of subjects, opportunities, a supportive system, quality instruction and career counselling services. In later career decisions, workplaces emerged as a key factor in influencing subsequent career goals, career clarity, job satisfaction, and work-life balance.

4.6.1 School

It was identified from the participants’ interviews that school played a pivotal role in terms of influencing the initial career goal mainly in the following four ways:

Curriculum

It was evident from the dialogue with participants that the opportunity to study a particular subject depended on what was being offered by the school. Students who could not study the subject in school would find accounting as a less likely career option. For example, it provided a pathway for
Martin as “It [accounting] was possibly a relatively new subject that they had brought into my school’s curriculum.” The female participants who went to all-girls school, reported that their schools offered embroidery, typing type subjects and did not offer accounting. Therefore, Carol developed her career goal later as she noted, “No, accounting wasn’t offered at my school at that time.”

Most participants in the 40 plus age group also shared that in their days, the schools used to stream subjects in a hierarchy, and the students were offered subjects on the basis of merit, and therefore the meritorious students could not do accounting as it belonged to the lower strata. Sue recalled, “So those sort of what we now call accounting was actually second to bottom, so I didn’t have any opportunity to study accounting at school.”

**Teachers**

A few participants who had formed a clear career goal while in school, talked about the influence of their teachers. It was evident that teachers had played an important role in generating interest and shaping preferences. Here is a representative sentiment by Ryan, “The inspiration probably came from a teacher [of accounting] at the high school, he created a very competitive environment in the classroom, an environment that I sort of thrived on I think.”

**Career counselling**

A few participants talked about career evenings, and how these provided information about different career fields and options. James benefitted from the information he got about the studentship at IRD from the career advisor, “It’d have been the careers guy at school I think he had this information about the part time studies and the pay of the fees.”

But the majority did not seem to receive much career guidance. Philip recollected that, “In the final year at high school we had a career advisor. I don’t recall them being particularly helpful, all I recall is being given pamphlets.” Ruth recalled less help still: “No one ever suggested accounting as a career option; I don’t think any girls from my class became accountants.” Virginia echoed, “I’m surprised that when I look back now that the school counsellor had never suggested it as a career, given my interest and my abilities.”

**Liaison**

Schools can also act as facilitators in liaising between students and external organisations. For example, Laura pursued accounting as a career because, “A local firm approached the school wanting people to come in, so I got a job through that, in just a small local CA firm. So that was kind of how I started into it I suppose, probably not specifically planned as such.” Similarly Scott shared what led him on the accounting pathway, “And then a couple of opportunities came up through the school, where jobs were being offered for accountants.”
Based on the above categories, a table was prepared (see Appendix N.1) to give an indication about school support and formation of initial career goal. As can be observed from the above discussion and value codes in the table, school support seemed to have been an influencing factor in terms of establishing initial career clarity. The sample is too small to give a stronger conclusion, but the patterns are suggestive. The participants with low support seemed to have less clarity, and the ones with high support seemed to have benefitted in terms of forming a clear goal.

4.6.2 Workplace

The dialogue with the participants demonstrated that workplace can make a deep impact on the career pathways either by facilitating professional development or by restraining it. It was quite evident with their responses that the accounting practitioners had far more instances when they talked positively about their firms, as compared to the academics who had fewer instances of positive comments; they mainly complained about the changed nature of the job especially with regard to PBRF and having lost academic freedom, although those who had shifted from accounting firms to academia are happy to have avoided the “clocking-in clocking-out” nature of the job in the firms and enjoy the flexibility offered by academia though at a lower payment. It is interesting to note that none of the accounting practitioners reported these factors as limiting, and in fact they talked enthusiastically about the flexibility and freedom their job offered them.

Thus, based on the textual data provided by the participants, the support was rated at high, medium and low level (see Appendix N.2). The ratings of the responses was based on the discussion below where the participants acknowledged the role of the workplace in the following words.

**High support**

Eighteen participants appreciated the high level of support. Mandy enthused, “So that freedom, and me feeling truly comfortable that I can come and go when I want to... that freedom is massive.” Robert gratefully acknowledged, saying “It was an amazing place to work, it gave me a new lease on life, it showed me that I could exist outside of public service, and probably gave me the courage to do what I am doing.”

**Medium support**

About 16 participants’ accounts revealed that they had a medium level of support. For example, Scott is satisfied about the work culture, but felt controlled, saying “They are very restrictive in terms of what you can do with trusteeships and directorships, so that’s why I feel a bit hamstrung by that.” George commented on academia, saying, “I think the idea of academic freedom rarely exists anymore. Academia is becoming so commercialised, sort of ‘university is a business’ kind of idea...”
Low support
The remaining two participants found the organisational culture quite limiting. Carol said, “It still is quite a tight male network, it has slowed down my progress I think.”

Derived from the participants’ accounts, the main aspects of the role played by workplace in job satisfaction and career development were categorized under eight headings, each of which is discussed in turn.

Organisational support and opportunities
James who shifted from a government job to a private firm, appreciated the freedom and support he received from his boss in the early days of joining the firm. He recollected his boss’s advice – “Do what you want to do, within the boundaries, those boundaries are pretty wide... and basically you decide what you want to do and we’ll make every effort to support you to get there.”

Yvonne thrived on the overall support, “The one Partner [female] here has been supportive and has been a good role model, someone that you can look up to, and just general people here.... across the spectrum.” Carol was well supported by her firm during the career break for her children – “I did actually resign, but they then got me a few jobs, they had clients who needed someone to come in and do various things.”

Robert benefitted immensely from the different opportunities his organisation has offered him, “I ended up being a trainer on one of those courses where I took four months secondment out of my job to be a trainer of staff, which was an invaluable experience for me really.”

Sam has stayed with the same organisation because, “… pretty much every three years something in my career has given me a new window, a fresh focus.” Similarly Patrick shared, “I feel that my role has changed probably on average every four to five years, so within [present firm] I feel I have been getting that career progression.”

Yvonne has not experienced any glass ceiling limitations because of the support – “There haven’t been any limiting factors because of the organisation that this is... it’s very flexible and it’s about the person and not their gender.” She further corroborated the unconditional support in these words, “Yes, and certainly they encourage you, like people wanting to go overseas, they won’t put pressure on them to stay, you know go and then they come back, what’s best for your development, where you are in your life at that moment.”

A few participants have shifted as they were not satisfied with the previous firm. They are happy with the present firm because of the support and opportunities it has offered them. When Amanda’s firm was taken over by a bigger firm, the change presented new prospects to her, “I could see lots of
new opportunities, because they [the new firm] were much more IT focussed, and a bit more modern, but different with their approach with clients, and it was like a new job. The firm is always changing, and evolving, that’s quite a progressive company.”

Mandy enthused about how she has flourished in the new organisation, “This is a great environment. [The present firm] is just fantastic. [The boss] is fantastic to work with. I have to acknowledge that the environment, the atmosphere, the culture, the people here are so supportive, so supportive, quite different from the [previous firm] culture.” Similarly Sharon who has changed to a new firm appreciated – “I just think that this kind of environment has provided the flexibility and it just enables you to do the job really well without having the extra pressures.” Robert acknowledged the support from the new firm, “They made a change of rules at the firm to allow me to work in the new role. It gave me a new lease on life.”

Because of this support and the opportunities that the firm has offered them, none of the accounting practitioners are looking at career progression by starting their own practice. Cheryl shared, “I prefer the environment that I am in here as to starting one myself. I prefer the people, the group, and the opportunities that you have got nationally.”

Training
The accounting practitioners were vociferous in their appreciation for the training organised by their firms. Carol said, “We have weekly, fortnightly training here, so you are always up to date with what’s going on, and because we have all the different teams here, they keep you up to date as well.” Similarly Alice, “We have got quite a good training. If you see a seminar that you want to go to, you just let them know that you are interested.”

There are a variety of training options covering a wide range. Yvonne offered, “The technical updates, or every now and then we might have a soft skills type coaching or type of management, so there is always some training going on.” Patrick works with an international team and he has benefitted, “… as we globalise more there are training courses on how to counsel across borders.”

However, the academic participants confessed to receiving no training as such; a representative comment by Keith explained it clearly – “There wasn’t any training. It was just … here’s the classroom, go and do it. The training was, you’ll be alright, and there was no real training.” As a result, the academics did not feel well supported by their organisation. They felt that their professional development is hindered by the trial and error, and learning-on-the job approach.
Freedom to design job

Almost all participants from both cohorts (academia and firms) indicated they had the freedom to design their job, within boundaries. Cheryl shared, “They are very flexible with whatever you would like to do in terms of how you’d like to approach the work.” Laura acknowledged, “It is a very open environment; you just do that if you want to. It’s completely up to us as to what we do ourselves, what we get people to do, any work we win it’s up to us how we handle that.”

Others echoed these comments, Philip – “It is very much up to you to make the role what you want it to be to a large extent.” Roger – “They kind of leave you alone here, and let you get on with the work, it’s a very satisfying place to be.” Sharon – “I pretty much defined how I worked and what I did quite well, and I think just our environment and the type of work I do enables that.”

Organisations also benefit when they give freedom to employees, as Yvonne observed, “They [the firm] encourage to take ownership and think like a business owner, because it’s in their best interests, because then you are gathering more work and generating more revenue, taking responsibility for it.”

Flexibility

Organisations have realized the importance of facilitating work-life balance for its employees. James commented on how organisations benefit from adopting this approach – “The work-life balance is an actual key driver for the firm.”

This can be achieved through different work arrangements. Flexibility is offered in terms of planning the timing of work, that is, flexible work schedules, which may include flexitime – flexibility in the time the workday begins and ends, or compressed workweek – working a full-time schedule but doing so in fewer than five days. Employees are also offered to work part-time to suit the circumstances (for example, young children needing care) or they may work from home making use of the technology, which is called telecommuting, thereby providing flexibility in the location of work. All participants reported that their organisation offered them flexibility and they used either of these work patterns.

Contrary to the experience of some of the participants who have shifted from firms to academia because of the “clocking-in clocking-out” culture of the firms; most of the accounting practitioners did not feel restrained by this, and expressed that they enjoyed the flexibility their job offered them. Mandy, for example, expressed, “So that freedom and me feeling truly comfortable that... well at the moment I can come and go when I want to anyway, but that freedom is massive.” Similarly Jeremy, though he is not at the top level felt, “Generally I am my own boss still, in terms of when I turn up.
and when I leave sort of thing.” Robert said, “I will work extra hours so that I can have an hour and a half off in the afternoon to go and watch my son run in his athletic sports.”

**Superiors**

It was identified that superiors played a huge role in terms of job satisfaction, facilitation for career progress, and work-life balance. James recalled fondly, “I got grabbed by the boss for working weekends, because I’d got given some work, and I’ve got to sit and do it, and he says, look... I got told very much, very strongly that the work could be done on Monday, it does not need to be done over the weekend, and if you are here next weekend, we’ll be having a serious discussion.”

Mandy joined a new firm after the stifling atmosphere at her old job – “Here it was so liberating. Do what you want. I had to travel for sport and he [the boss] said, ‘Fine, we’ll see you back when you are back. Let me know if there is anything I can do.” Obviously Mandy is prospering in the supportive atmosphere. Similarly, Sarah is appreciative of her boss and colleagues when she had to be away to look after her ailing father – “They were very accommodating and very understanding, so once again I am very grateful for that.”

The female participants who had a female boss found it encouraging, as Alice shared – “It’s definitely a nice change having a female here that’s higher up, because the whole management structure was all male dominated.” For Yvonne, having a female boss signalled a career pathway for progress as a female employee, she shared, “...seeing her progress and become a Partner that sort of motivated me, if she can do it, then there is a pathway for it.”

A female academic participant reported dissatisfaction about management, “We have three of us (females) in particular last twelve months have come up against barriers where the dean has assumed because we’ve got families, and partners and commitments. There are a lot of things, in particular some of the more senior male managers... higher up work on some very false assumptions about females, there’s a huge glass ceiling.”

On the contrary, Patrick explained how he was presented with opportunities that women might not have, “I got a job in the Accounts Department”, he said, “and at that time I was the only male in the team. They were putting a new computer system. It was assumed that as a young male I will be able to pick it up quicker than others.” This demonstrates the glass escalator effect found in the literature that men may find it easier to ascend in certain situations.

**Work associates**

A recurring theme for participants working in the firms was the importance of teamwork and collegial support. The nature of Patrick’s job allows him to work from home but, “The main reason I
come to the office is having some colleagues around me ... it’s the main reason. I could almost work from home every day, but I think I will probably go crazy working from home on my own.”

Most wish to continue working in the firm, and not start a practice of their own, and one of the main reasons is the support and social contact with their work associates. Amanda is aware of the benefits of working together, “We work in a team, so we try to use the resources of the other staff to get our work done in a timely manner.” Carol appreciated the fact that, “I still like to feed off people and learn from others.” Yvonne summed it up rather well, “In a professional organisation people are motivated and they are intelligent, and they want to do well and develop themselves, so it’s a perfect environment for moving yourself forward.”

Social events
As elaborated earlier, social connections at workplace are vital for effective functioning, and the organisations seem to facilitate opportunities through various events. Carol appreciated these events, “We are quite a sociable firm, I guess that’s because we have a lot of networking events, and so lot of us go and you mingle with your colleagues then. I just know everybody so well, and I have very easy relationships with people because of that I think.”

In contrast, some participants did not share the same experience, as one of the participants admitted, “We’re not really a very close group. I really struggle... sometimes I come to work and speak to nobody, probably for days, it’s not really very conducive, collegial atmosphere. It’s like everybody is sort of in their own little world and they don’t want any contact. So we don’t have any social activities here.”

Mentoring
Most of the participants appreciated advice and mentoring by seniors or managers in the organisations. As stated earlier, the tutor-to-academic route was carved for many accounting academics mainly because of the senior academic staff who recognized and motivated suitable students to become tutors. As one of the academics expressed, “Back then most of the professors encouraged young staff and senior students, who were bright.”

However, apart from a few instances, a majority of academics reported a lack of ongoing mentoring or training. As Keith shared, he received no teaching support when he needed it badly as he was terrified of talking in front of people, “The person who first employed me told me it’s basically ‘trial by fire’; so you learn by doing. They told me that we throw you into the fire, and if you survive that then you’ll be ok and if you don’t then you go and do something else.” He admitted that, “In terms of kind of overall mentoring I’d say, there’s been a kind of a void.”
Roger who thinks of his career as, “a series of mistakes”, admitted to having no mentoring, “I had no mentor. I had no one that ... could even tell me.” Similarly Scott shared, “I think most of it I have done is self-directed. I have not really followed any major mentor.”

The participants who had mentors expressed how it was of great help to them in showing the right direction. Nancy acknowledged the support she received from a motivational coach, “So I credit him with changing my thinking around, or starting the process of changing my thinking around.” During her career break for children, she was confused and restless, but it all changed when, “I went to a couple more seminars, and again, he was the one who got me all started.”

It seemed quite important for the female participants to have a woman mentor, to be able to see a pathway for a woman accountant. Sharon who has now been acting as a mentor to others, emulated her boss in the early career in terms of managing and progressing as a working woman and a mother – “I did see her as that great role model. She had three children when I was working for her, and she was active in all sorts of things. I sort of always hark back to her in terms of how I have conducted myself in terms of profession, so she is probably the key one.”

Yvonne acknowledged the role of mentoring in her career pathway – “The woman Partner here, she was the one who interviewed me and she was my manager, so she has been my mentor and seeing her progress and become a Partner... that sort of motivated me.”

Compared to academia, the accounting firms have more formal and structured mentoring programmes. Mentoring also seems to be a continuous process, and valued at every stage of the career. However, it was found that formal mentoring has been more prevalent for the younger generation of professionals. One of the younger participants, Alice, shared her experience, “You have a buddy and a coaching manager, so we do have mentoring as such.” On the contrary, participants in the 40 above age group were more likely to feel disadvantaged because of the lack of mentoring, then and now. As Carol complained, “Yes, we do [have mentoring], but it’s for the younger staff.” She regretted that, “Early on there were no people that I felt I could approach..., whereas now I wish there was someone I could speak to more freely about what I want to do, where I want to end up.” Similarly one of the academics shared, “I feel sort of mentor-less at the moment. I sort of feel like I am associate professor, so I should be providing leadership to other people, but I still feel I need somebody to help me.”

Thus, the discussion in the above sections has established the important role played by family and organisation in influencing career decisions. As discussed earlier, there are also external factors which are often beyond human control that can affect lives of people, positively or negatively. These
are a variety of factors which constitute external environment; a few examples are given below to help understand the implication of these factors as identified in the textual data analysis.

4.7. The role of external environment

The term 'environment' connotes external forces, basically the surrounding factors and institutions that influence career decisions and outcomes, but are primarily uncontrollable. They make an impact on people at different time frames, which can be positive or negative. Some factors may take years to permeate down to the individual level, whereas some may have an immediate impact. The following discussion illustrates.

Socio-cultural environment

The socio-cultural environment is a key factor in shaping beliefs, norms, and forming career orientations, particularly for female participants. Sue shared how a few of her colleagues would comment on her working patterns, basically reflecting societal norms prevalent at the time, “I used to come on the weekends and occasionally my male colleagues… there was this one guy who used to say, ‘What are you doing here on the weekend? Who’s looking after your children?’ And I’d say, ‘Well, my husband is their parent as well.” Sarah talked about the low proportion of working women, “It’s wasteful for the country, for the personal life. There’s a long way for the society to appreciate the full potential of women, working in conjunction with men, of course not against each other.”

On a positive note, changes in the social environment inspired Jane and put her on a career pathway, “I remember one of the catch phrases at the time, ‘the world is your oyster and you can do whatever you want to’. I think, back then the girls were being encouraged that they could do more.”

Natural environment

The earthquakes in Christchurch in 2010-11 disrupted the physical and social environment for people to a large degree. As one participant shared, “We are a bit isolated because we are over here, but our building is being remediated at the moment after the earthquake. The sort of environment we work in is not really conducive in that we work in separate buildings... before the earthquake we were much more aware of when people were in. It was much easier to sort of knock on people’s door, but now it’s a bit of an effort. A lot of colleagues are in that building over there on different levels... I don’t know whether they are in or out.”

One of the academic participants also expressed concerns about relationship with students, “After the earthquake I have set up most of my stuff at home to be honest, that’s where I do a lot of my reading and research. A lot of students... not so much now because we are away from the campus, but in the old building prior to the earthquake, I’d often have students come in, and sometimes it was not discipline related, it was just for a bit of advice about applying for a job, or something else.”
Economic environment
A few participants had to relocate due to the global economic changes. One of them shared that, “The global crisis basically, we were ok in 2008, 2009 and 2010 over there [Europe], and then it really started to hit home about 2010 and 11, and they were looking to remove all of the people who were in a position where they didn’t go further…”, and since she was not interested in a promotion, she resigned and decided to come back to New Zealand.

Business environment
Sarah found the environment conducive for entry into the job market when she completed her accounting qualification, “Accounting is something… I could go anywhere and say I am an accountant, and of course once I am qualified that’s fine, you had a piece of paper that says CA and you can go to any country anywhere, and have this qualification, and immediately, there’s work of some kind.”

Country environment
A few participants reflected on the advantages of working in New Zealand, maintaining that it has a more conducive work culture as compared to some other countries. Philip has no ambition of going overseas at present, “There is also the balance, the lifestyle as well, and that is something New Zealand can offer, that a lot of the other countries can’t. It’s not you must be seen to be here at 7 o’clock at night to prove that you’re doing a good job.”

The view is echoed by Patrick, “I suppose one of the things I see in New Zealand as opposed to some of my US colleagues is that there is a lot more focus in New Zealand on having a work-life balance and whereas my colleagues in the States, it’s sort of like you’ve got to be seen to be working 50-60 hours a week.”

Participants with children were unanimous in their view of New Zealand as a nice place for families, and they shared that their career decisions were influenced by this. Daniel decided to come back home as, “New Zealand is a much better place to bring up the kids.”

Political-legal environment
Amanda benefitted from the government policy of offering support to students; in her days it meant that she could go back to university to complete her degree with full financial support – “I didn’t work at all. For me back then we got quite a good allowance that you could actually live on.” This was crucial for her as she did not have the family support, “Not my parents particularly, they just being that older generation, they didn’t particularly encourage me, so it was quite self-directed.” James

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Incidentally, New Zealand ranks eighth on life satisfaction in the OECD better life index of 36 countries (OECD, 2015). The study measures life satisfaction in terms of how people evaluate their life as a whole.
also acknowledged the government support, “Student loans and that ‘pay as you go’ environment was in its infancy, and there were still student allowances being paid.”

Changes in GST (Good and Services tax) rules helped Philip find a new career pathway as a specialist when he was commissioned to Australia by his firm. He shared, “The thing I have most enjoyed about that was, because there wasn’t a lot of GST knowledge in Australia at that time, you could basically design the project the way you wanted it to be.”

Academic policy changes, especially PBRF and other decisions have impacted on academics’ lives to a large extent. Many of them commented that the changes in academia have resulted in more micromanagement, restrictive research areas, commercialisation, more bureaucracy, less freedom etc. resulting in teaching being relegated in priority.

One of the academic participants decided to relocate to complete his PhD due to the changes in the university policy, “Initially when I joined having a professional qualification and what have you was all that mattered... over the last few years, not having the PhD. So it’s moved from being teaching being the relevant thing and having professional background was great, that ticked all the boxes initially. That was one of the reasons for leaving, I was going no further. I wouldn’t have become a reader or a professor without getting a PhD.” Therefore, he moved to New Zealand through his contacts at the university for his doctoral research.

External organisations
External organisations influenced the career decisions of some participants. For example, IRD (Inland Revenue Department) played an important role in forming the initial career pathway for some participants. IRD’s studentship programme facilitated qualifying students to work in the holidays or part time while they pursued their tertiary studies, and IRD paid student fees. From our 36 participants, three took up this opportunity in the initial days, and all have reached the highest positions in their firms.

Sharon benefitted enormously as she shared, “I had a studentship with the IRD, so I got to do the work holidays basically for the Revenue. Three years, the whole time that I was studying they gave me holiday jobs basically, so I always had some guaranteed work instead of picking fruit and doing all that sorts of things that would be the alternative.”

James wanted to drop out of school, and he wanted to work. He could do both work and study and pursue a career because – “… being able to work full time and study part time, allowed me to get the work experience, they [IRD] paid every year’s fees and gave me time. I got a scholarship basically for
the year from IRD on full pay, and went and studied full time, but then I was bonded for three years after that.”

Another important professional organisation, NZICA seemed to have played a big role in the career progression of accounting academics who did not have the professional qualification, but had academic experience. NZICA changed the qualification rules which meant that the contribution of accounting academics was recognized and they were given the status of Associate Chartered Accountant (ACA), at a non-practicing level.

Sue recalled the process, “...well actually if people have done a PhD then they have peer review, they have got expertise, they have developed in the area and if they are teaching on courses which are required for the Institute, so they are actually training the people who are becoming CAs, why aren’t they able to become a CA? And so they [NZICA] made this new pathway [ACA] for academics. So if you have got a PhD in accounting and you are teaching in the required courses, then they let us in.” This has enhanced the professional qualifications of the accounting academics where they feel that their academic experience is acknowledged and validated by the professional organisation.

4.8. Conclusion

The above discussion of how the career pathways were formed, the factors determining it and their future plans has helped to analyse the career development of accounting profession participants. In particular, the qualitative approach has helped to understand the “why” and “how” of this phenomenon.

Investigation of career orientation revealed distinct gender differences. While career flow of most male participants was uninterrupted; all married female participants with children but one, had taken a career break for family reasons. It was also noted that women had an adaptive focus on career whereas men could focus on their careers to a greater extent confirming the traditional male career pattern. Six women participants have a stay-at-home partner, but this does not seem to have freed them of the family responsibilities as their male counterparts experienced with a supportive wife.

With regard to the pathways of the academics, ten of the 15 participants had shifted from firms and other sectors, but there were no shifts in reverse, that is from academia to firms. Moreover, none of the academics had academia as a career with a single minded focus, whereas about half of the accounting practitioners (11) had focused on accounting as an initial goal. About two-third of the participants have navigated their career trying out different pathways. At this stage, almost all had a greater clarity about their future career goals though comparatively fewer women wanting to reach the top positions, citing family priorities and work-life balance as a driving factor.
The overall support from family of orientation and school was found pivotal in paving the initial career pathway. Family of procreation, specifically spousal support in terms of family responsibilities is constructive for later career development. Workplace was also found important for professional development and facilitating work-life balance.

Thus, the numerous examples and related discussion have demonstrated the reasons for the variety of career patterns at the same time displaying commonalities with regard to gender. The external factors of family, organisation and environment have played an important role in the process. The following chapter builds on this material to construct a framework which the researcher has termed “career crafting”. It then explores the association between career crafting and personal success by linking the developments in the career pathways with the career crafting practices of the participants.
Chapter 5
Towards an Extended Paradigm of Career Crafting

5.1. Introduction

The previous chapter elaborated on the career pathways of the study’s participants. It presented career lattice and examined how different career orientations were with regard to gender. It outlined the different routes the participants had taken to becoming an accounting professional and looked closely at how the career goals were formulated at different life stages which shaped the career pathways. The analysis in the previous chapter confirmed that family, organisation and environment were the major influential external factors in their career progression. The individual factors were not expounded in the discussion, but were evident.

This chapter focuses on the role of individuals in crafting careers. “Self” is of particular interest to this study, as the central concept of career crafting is based on the idea that careers can be developed in an intentional manner if individuals make it a conscious process, and thereby proactively make positive changes. Understandably, certain aspects of the above mentioned external constructs cannot be changed, and they are not entirely within the control of the individual; but career crafting proposes that what can be managed to some extent is the individual’s response to and action on the changes. Thus, this research is primarily interested in the role of the individuals – how well they have adapted to the situation or have invented a new way of dealing with life. This can be called the adaptation/invention approach to career crafting wherein the participants are open-minded about the change, are willing to take risks to change a situation, or sometimes change their thinking to adjust to the situation, thus primarily focusing on what one can control to a certain extent.

In this study, participants’ career development did not appear to be a linear process that entirely moved with age or life stage. It was rather found to be a unique process that differed from individual to individual depending on his/her life stage and needs, and the decisions and actions taken from the point of entry into the workforce to the later career stages. Rather, career development seemed to be due to some other factor in force. In fact, it was observed in the analysis that it could be due to certain career crafting elements that were “implicit”. These elements are further explored in this chapter to examine the concept of career crafting and to test the validity of the paradigm by identifying instances of behaviour of the participants that might be termed career crafting. Building on the results of Chapter 4, this chapter draws on the material gathered in the interviews to

Some quotations are repeated in this chapter while presenting the findings; as the different aspects overlap and the quotes demonstrate the different contexts aptly.
develop the career crafting paradigm. The analysis centres on how individuals take different decisions and actions, and how these can be linked to examine the presence and impact of career crafting on desired career outcomes. Thus, this chapter uses the career crafting lens to confirm the role of individual crafting by emphasizing on the following areas as the main focus of the enquiry:

- Can specific instances of career crafting be identified with regard to different career decisions?
- Is there evidence of whether career crafting leads to personal success?

The hypothesis is that if individuals design their career pathways through cognitive crafting by managing relationships and activities, it leads to greater satisfaction and personal success. In this research study, the term personal success refers to the account of the participants about their career trajectory, as indicated by:

- Participants’ rating of life and job satisfaction (last two items in the data sheet, Appendix C); and
- Interpretation of the participants’ inputs about their own career trajectories in the interviews which is summarised to understand personal success.

The following section addresses the Research Question 5 (section 1.7) concerning what role does career crafting play in the career development process, drawing in particular on how the participants have made changes to the task, relational and cognitive aspects of their personal and professional lives.

### 5.2. Career crafting

The main aim of this research is to explore if career crafting enables people to develop their possible selves and build their capabilities to achieve desired outcomes in the given circumstances. Based on the job crafting model, it was proposed that the principal pillars of career crafting would be cognitive, relational and task crafting practices of individuals. The analysis in the previous chapter illustrated the different ways in which individuals take career decisions. Therefore, career crafting components are further expanded by synthesising the proposed model in Chapter 2 (section 2.7) and the analysis in Chapter 4:

1. Cognitive Crafting (CC) – self-awareness, prioritizing, conceptualisation of ideal career goal, reframing goals, perception and reality, and reframing perception of personal and professional life.
2. Relational Crafting (RC) – personal and professional relationships, the role of important others, altering the nature and extent of relationships, and selecting and nurturing relationships with key people.

3. Task Crafting (TC) – managing personal (family and leisure) and professional (routine, developmental, social) activities, community work, selecting tasks to achieve desired outcomes, and balancing personal and professional fronts.

As explained in Chapter 3 (section 3.7.6), participants’ responses with regard to the above were value coded and rated independently, that is, one construct was rated at a time, not taking into account the rating of it for the others. This was to mitigate any risk of biased coding. The interview inputs were labelled as per the type of crafting if the participants’ accounts covered any one or more of the above aspects, and then the participants were rated on that basis to measure the extent of their career crafting abilities. These instances were then value coded – low, medium and high – and tabulated to provide an indication of the level of crafting (see Appendix L). It is important to note here that in this qualitative research study, the numbers were primarily used for facilitating the mapping of the responses, not to present a phenomenon or a formula.

To illustrate the rating, Nancy was found to be a high level crafter as she resonated with the main principle of career crafting, of taking charge, making things happen. Nancy believes in,

   When you decide to do something, you have got to go and create it.

Nancy demonstrated this through her cognitive, task and relational crafting. She is aware of her work and family demands, and has worked out a schedule accordingly so that she can be around for her kids on the weekends, “I don’t work on weekends; I do my 50 hours between Monday and Friday. But it helps when I start at 7.15, four mornings a week, and then go through till 6pm, and they are 11 hour days. I have always been- how do I get to have both, and that’s what I have done. And yes, you make sacrifices, but I have got staff who work on a part time basis.”

Whereas this participant was rated low as there seemed to be low understanding of self, resulting in confusion: “I did apply for a couple of other jobs, which I didn’t get. It’s interesting enough because one of the people said to me, ‘I think you will be bored in this job’, which I possibly could have been. They obviously didn’t feel I was right for the job, and I probably wasn’t.”

The following discussion elaborates on the above three main aspects of crafting by explaining in detail the different components. It then identifies various incidents derived from the textual data to demonstrate the different crafting practices utilised by the participants.
5.2.1 Cognitive crafting

Cognitive means, of or relating to cognition; so cognitive crafting is associated with the conscious mental processes of perception, judgment and reasoning that involve thinking, understanding, learning, and remembering. The adaptation/invention approach mentioned earlier, largely depends on the cognitive abilities of the participants. It was identified that cognitive crafting also helped the participants in less supportive situations.

For example, one of the high level crafters, Mandy, has a full-time working husband and responsibilities for young children. She said that she has negotiated a work pattern that suits her personally and professionally. Mandy talked about the expectations of working full time for a partnership role in her previous firm. “That’s ridiculous; it’s quality not quantity and also it was because I think I am quite a creative person and I want to run with my own ideas, freedom within boundaries. So I had that thought process, am I going to be a Partner [in her previous firm], what does the life look like and am I going to be fighting to try and leave at 4 o’clock to go and see my daughters swimming, that’s a problem. Because I don’t want my daughters growing up thinking mum just worked. She was never there. Then I have done something really wrong.” So she searched for a firm where she did not have to work full time and was still able to reach the top position of a Partner.

On the contrary, Laura has a supportive, stay-at-home husband, but she has given up on her ambition of becoming a Partner in the firm as she thinks that, “Unless you are willing to put in the hours and the time, it will be quite hard to become a Partner”. Therefore, she was rated lower on the cognitive crafting scale; she was not able to explore new ways of achieving desired outcomes.

The following discussion further explains the concept of cognitive crafting using instances for each of the categories stated below, to explore different aspects of the concept.

- Self-awareness;
- Prioritizing;
- Conceptualisation of career goal;
- Reframing goals;
- Perception and reality; and
- Reframing perception of personal and professional life.

Self-awareness

Understandably, becoming aware of the self is a process, and it was found that participants who practised cognitive crafting have developed their understanding by doing, at times making mistakes but learning from them, or adapting to changed circumstances. Below are some examples of self-
awareness where the participants were clear about what they wanted to become or not, or what they wanted to do in their personal and professional life.

Daniel has worked in several sectors and has travelled the world; he has learned that – “One of the things I identified when I was in X [city], is that it’s very, very difficult to go out on your own. I am comfortable under a banner and Y [firm] being one of the largest financial services, you’ve got that credibility behind you straightaway which you’re then able to dovetail your brand into… my strengths are building on a strong brand and making my name within that brand.” This understanding has helped Daniel in the career progression.

Nancy has made career decisions based on the understanding of “self” which she has developed over the years, “One of the things I have learnt about myself is that I get bored easily. The typical CFO [Chief Financial Officer] role would have bored me to tears. I would have gone in, I would have improved the systems, I would have up-skilled staff, and then I’ll be - what next?” Cognitive crafting is also about knowing what you don’t want to do. Nancy further said, “I couldn’t imagine only having a 9 to 5 job, I couldn’t imagine being a researcher, where there is not something going on all the time. I couldn’t do [teach] something like accounting, because that’d be too dry for me, it’d have to be more of a business or entrepreneur type subject.” The clear self-concept has immensely helped Nancy in taking career decisions and achieving desired outcomes in her different life stages.

Martin decided to become an accountant as he developed an understanding of what he did not want to pursue as a career – “I had a very good job with my dad up at the bakery... it was a good paying job, hard physical work, but gave me an eye opener as well, didn’t want to do that for the rest of my life.” He is very happy with his career choice [accounting].

Kylie is aware of what she does not want to do, “I know that myself, if I wanted to, I could do it. I have done everything else that I know, I have had the mind-set that whatever I want to do it, I will do it, and I can do it, and that’s what, I just don’t want to. I was one of those people... I didn’t want to become a Partner, never, too much time commitment and too many meetings and socialising for me.” Being very clear about her personal and professional goals has helped Kylie to shape her career course with satisfying outcomes.

Prioritizing
As discussed previously (section 4.3.4) some participants, mainly women, have consciously chosen not to take up further growth opportunities at present, prioritizing their families. Mandy is clear about her role as a working mother, “The role came up to me to manage tax nationally, and I just went no, that’s not the right time. I’ve two younger children, and I am not going to go for that role. When the kids are a bit older, they are doing their own thing, then you can step up.” Similarly Yvonne
is also conscious of her role – “On occasion I want to go and support my child playing netball or something like that. So I don’t know whether I could do it as a partner. I am happy where I am, I don’t feel the need to financially or career wise that I want to go any further.”

On the other hand, Cheryl has decided to prioritize her career at present, “At the moment I am focussed on my career, so I have no plans for having children in near future”. All such participants who have knowingly drawn the boundaries on the basis of prioritization reported high level of satisfaction in their personal and professional life.

**Conceptualisation of career goal**

A good understanding of the self and setting priorities accordingly, seemed to have helped the participants in conceptualising an ideal career goal, as the following examples demonstrate.

Sue went to university when her children were older; she deliberately decided to pursue accounting because – “I had made a decision as an adult student that I’d study what interests me.” And then she seized the opportunity when – “I saw that they were short staffed and so I decided I will make that my aim to become a lecturer.” This decision is linked with her self-awareness – “I’d never actually practise as an accountant in a firm because I think teaching is my thing.”

Sam, a successful partner at a young age, had framed a clear pathway while in school, “My heart at the time when I was 16-17, ultimately was into flying helicopters, and skiing. But I was also very conscious that that’s not a long term career goal.” Accordingly he conceptualised his goal – “So be sensible and go to university and get your accounting qualification behind you.”

Patrick started doing a Bachelor’s degree, but he did not continue when he became aware that, “A lot of the stuff they were teaching was pretty irrelevant to the market place. So I have actually focussed in the last four years on actually getting professional qualifications relevant to my role.” This understanding helped him in conceptualising his goal.

**Reframing goals**

Cognitive crafting is also about reconsidering goals if the previous ones prove unsatisfactory over a period of time with a change in circumstances. Adaptation/invention approach plays an important role in this process. A few participants reframed their goals and made their career decisions in accordance with the new ways of thinking. For example, Arthur invented a new pathway and shifted from firms to academia when he realised, “Yes, I just felt it [academia] was really much more satisfying. I could have that much more control over what I was doing. I could decide what was important, and I liked the idea of doing research.”
Similarly, Albert also shifted to academia from a private firm, but the changes in the academic policy meant that he would have to complete a PhD for career progression. Realising that he would not be able to do it in the given circumstances, he relocated accepting a lower academic position in order to achieve his reviewed goals – “I need to get a PhD, perhaps moving job; I can sit in the background and get on with my PhD for a while. Well, it is a step down in some ways, but it was sort of one step back to be able to hopefully take two steps forward and do the PhD. That was one of the reasons for leaving, I was going no further. I wouldn’t have become a reader or a professor without getting a PhD.”

Nancy has reframed her goals a few times. She gave up her top position when she was pregnant – “I had this thing in my head that I would be this real earth mother, because I enjoyed arts and crafts, but after a year I had itchy feet... if I have to do this for the next 20 years, I will kill myself type of thing.” Upon realising that she could not adapt, she invented a new goal by going to a motivation course in Sydney, and came out of that charged with an idea of starting a business. Being a professional accountant, she started an accounting firm. After running it successfully for a few years, she again reconceptualised her career goal when she realised she needed to devote more time to her family. So she sold it to a bigger firm, and since then she has been working as a Partner within the same firm, and reported high level of satisfaction about this career outcome.

Amanda feels that she missed the opportunity of promotion (perhaps because of low cognitive crafting in the past), but now she has adapted to the circumstances, “I needed to do that [aim for promotion] ten years ago really if I wanted to do that. So I probably missed. I don’t really want to go further up the ladder. I like the level that I am at... would rather go more sideways and more just have a job that’s actually less hours.”

Perception and reality
It was found that the closer one’s perception was to reality, one knew what to expect and therefore when the participants got what they had bargained for, they felt satisfied with the experience. The participants who were rated high for their cognitive crafting ability, demonstrated this aspect very well.

Yvonne is very happy with her decision of becoming an accounting practitioner, “Just the fact that I was good at working with numbers and I enjoyed the analytical or the balancing and reconciling side of things, that’s the way I work, I like to be logical and methodological, so that suited me.” Similarly, Cheryl who had decided to become an accountant at the age of ten, had a clear idea of her career, “What I had seen back then, of what my parents had shown me is closely related to what I am doing now, working with small businesses. My perception was... that was always what I wanted to do, work with small businesses.” They both reported high satisfaction.
Some others could not perceive reality as well, and this led to dissatisfaction as they did not get what they had expected. For example, Carol felt disillusioned as she had hoped that, “As you progress through your career you think one day I will get to the top, and I won’t have to work so hard because I will be there now, and I will have more free time, life would be a wee bit different. Whereas I think you get further up the chain and you have to work a lot harder, and you don’t have as much free time, and life is stressful.”

Similarly, Kylie found the reality different from her perception of what accounting job entailed and therefore initially she found it difficult to adjust. She had thought accounting was, “… going in the back room somewhere, being left alone, adding up numbers, and making financial statements; and that to me was perfect; I didn’t realise how interactive it actually was. So that was a bit difficult.” Likewise, Sally has not been able to adjust to the reality of an academic job – “I mean... I honestly thought what they do is teach and teach at a high level. I thought they had long holidays. Reality is now I work very long hours, I am feeling tired all the time.”

Sarah also found it very challenging to accept the reality of working as an accounting practitioner, “I was quite naïve, I thought that it was a kind of career that was not emotionally demanding...I thought that it’d leave me completely free for family obligations. But what I had underestimated was that accounting is very demanding, and that it does take up a lot of time. In practice there are times when there are deadlines, and you are just required to keep working nights, weekends, evenings... to get something finished. It’s not family friendly.” Later, she invented a new career pathway and shifted to accounting academia.

**Reframing perception for better outcomes**

If there is a dissonance between perception and the reality, individuals need to change their former views about their careers to get more satisfaction out of their choices. It was identified that at times, they changed their view of how they would like to lead their lives on the basis of their own experiences or sometimes by observing other people. Changed perception led to a new view of personal or professional life, and as a result greater satisfaction.

Carol’s thinking is very clear around her career progression now that she has observed the working patterns of people around her – “It isn’t to be a partner, because I see how the partners here just devote their life to their job pretty much and that’s not me, because I have to balance that still with my family.”

Keith reported that he is less stressful about teaching since he has changed his thinking about having ready answers to the students’ questions, “I had to make sure I really knew everything, so when
someone asked me a question, I could instantly answer it... and over time I have learnt that it’s okay to say I’ll get back to you.”

Thus, it can be observed from the above discussion, through cognitive crafting the participants who developed a new way of thinking, adapted to the changed circumstances or invented a new pathway; experienced positive impact on the resultant personal and professional outcomes. Certainly, it also depends on the two other elements of career crafting. The following section discusses the second component of career crafting — relational crafting.

### 5.2.2 Relational crafting

This section presents evidence from the interviews on the specific ways through which people exercised relational crafting. It primarily refers to how individuals selected and managed relationships with others in their personal and professional life. To illustrate, Robert has a “family first” approach, and he specified that, “It has certainly made me a better boss, a better manager of people, because I understand that everybody in their life has got conflicting pressures going on, and when you have been through some of those, then it helps you be a better manager. The earthquake is another really good example of that where my first thought was where my family were, and it was a real priority for me to know that they are OK. But I also know that all my staff are thinking exactly the same thing, I think some of the experiences I have had, have helped me sort of manage that better, and that’s just not home life either, that’s also from my work.”

Daniel was rated high for his relational crafting. He treasures the relationship with his boss as he understands that — “She is prickly, but she cares deeply. So certainly she’s looked after me.” He believes that, “If you hang around with the best, some of it ought to rub off.” On the contrary, this participant was rated low as, “I really struggle... sometimes I come to work and speak to nobody probably for days.”

Based on their accounts as discussed below, participants were rated for their extent of relational crafting (see Appendix L.2). The main components are:

- Personal relationships;
- Professional relationships;
- Altering the nature and extent of relationships; and
- Selecting and nurturing relationships with key people.

**Personal relationships**

Personal relationships, mainly family, featured prominently in the discussion with the participants. Mandy has reached the top position in her organisation, but she is mindful about not accepting
greater responsibilities at this stage – “I’d need a bigger slice of the pie, and I can’t do that without severely compromising other aspects and right now that’s not a possibility, it might be in the future. For me it really does come down to the kids, are they getting the time they need?” Similarly, Robert prioritized his family over work when his children were young, sacrificing his career progression – “I took a demotion to go back to the office back home as we wanted our children to grow up knowing their grandparents and cousins well.” Having established the connections, he has now moved to a bigger city and is more focussed on his career.

Nathan also values the precious time with his children,

At the end of the day, my kids, they’re never going to be this age again. So I can’t have the experiences that I am having with them now in five or ten years’ time and so if I am asked to choose, I would choose my family every time.

A few participants probably lacked this understanding when their children were young, but they have altered their behaviour now. For example, Virginia has consciously made an effort to cut down on work and has redefined the relationship with her son – “I have been trying to be better in the last couple of years, because I’ve suddenly realised that my son is now 13, and I haven’t spent much time with him.” Likewise, Nancy sold her thriving practice when she became aware that she needed to spend more time at home, “… so my son, 12 going on 13, he was my primary reason for selling [the firm] to make sure I would be available for him.”

Thus, the awareness of the different aspects of personal relationships and the decisions taken by the participants seem to have resulted in achieving desired outcomes; namely, managing fulfilling relationships in the personal sphere.

**Professional relationships**

Professional relationships can be viewed at various levels – internally with superiors, work associates and subordinates in the organisation; and with regard to the external work relationships – for accounting practitioners, relationships with their clients are vital; and for academics, it is important to network with academics from other universities for research.

Work relationships are important just by the virtue of the time spent at work. Nathan put it succinctly,

What you need to decide is I have to get up every day and go on and work with this group of people, can I actually do that, because I will be doing the same thing every day for a long period of time.
Martin appreciated the nature and benefits of two-way relationships with his young staff – “The staff around me ...most of them are younger, so I am able to pass on a little bit of wisdom or knowledge, but they certainly pass knowledge back the other way in terms of technology, so there is a bit of two-way learning there.” Similarly, Robert acknowledged the importance of supporting his staff as a win-win strategy – “So, I know that if I expect my staff to go that extra length for me, then when they want an hour to go and watch their kid at the school sports, or at the school prize-giving or dance recitals or whatever it is, it’s an easy thing. If their work-life balance is good, then their work contribution will be good.”

Mandy changed her behaviour after becoming aware of her strong personality and its effect on people – “I’m just really enthusiastic and driven. I want to make things happen, and I’ve come across people who can be intimidated by that, and I had to be conscious and aware of that...” Mandy’s open-mindedness and adaptability to change has enabled her to develop excellent relationships with her team and colleagues.

Daniel seemed to have developed excellent relationships with his clients, elaborating, “It’s just not a business association; it’s a relationship. When we talk to our clients, we talk in language like, I’d talk in ‘we’, because at that time I am part of their organisation, and we work with our clients to solve their problems, to help them solve their problems, we’re a part of their decision, we’re not telling them what to do, we’re working with them. Clients love it when you’re thinking about their business, and feel that when you understand their business. We get to bond with them, which means that it becomes so much harder for somebody to come in and displace us.” This approach has transcended the professional relationships into personal ones, as he revealed, “I have clients who I almost consider my friends.”

One of the accounting academics shared that he did not have a mentor while he was studying in school, but he did have one in the university, and that made a positive difference to his career. He therefore recognises the importance of it; and supports his students and shares an excellent relationship with them. This was endorsed by a best teacher award he had received recently. He shared his thoughts on mentoring, “I think I’m very privileged as a teacher to be a part of that process [mentoring]. I can really see where the struggle has come from; I can see with the younger students, life choices are very important.”

Selecting and nurturing relationships with key people
Relational crafting does not mean one has to get on well with everyone, it is also about selecting the nature, amount and level of relationships in the personal and professional spheres. Mandy is aware of her expectations from social interactions and she conducts her social life accordingly, “I am not terribly good at social chit chat... What’s the point of a trivial conversation? Why am I going to have
that?” Therefore, she has consciously made choices about the friendships, “So most of my friends tend to be male, and my female friends, ones that I have got, tend to be quite high up in their careers as well.” Similarly, Jeremy is clear about conducting himself in terms of work relationships – “I get on well with most people... if I don’t like people, I don’t talk to them.”

Daniel is selective when it comes to relationships with his staff; he stated, “I probably deliberately distance myself a bit more from that. It is difficult if you get too close to your staff to draw a line, and in times you need to give a hard message.”

Sharon has consciously created good relationships with her superiors – “I’ve always been really well supported within the firm, whichever firm I have worked with the partners, I did actively build relationships.” Robert employs the principle of “give and take” for nurturing relationships, collaborating instead of competing – “When I can’t do work because of the conflict, I give work to them [competing firm] and they give work to me.”

### Altering the nature and extent of relationships

Maintaining relationships is a dynamic and a two-way process, which changes with the people involved, the time and the circumstances. Relational crafting is also about understanding what changes need to be made, and being open about implementing those changes. Sam, one of the high level crafters in this research, changed his leadership style upon getting some negative feedback from his team,

> I am much more interested and accessible for my team than I had been. But it’s a constant journey of improvement; I enjoy the team element a lot more now. So I spent the best part of a year in just putting number one priority on people, and the other stuff would follow. So we reorganised our team, did a whole lot of work on what we do, we are in a better shape now; and I learnt a lot from that and feel I’m a better leader for doing so.

Sharon has cautionary advice in differentiating between friendships and professional relationships, “The friends that you make from, that start as a professional relationship, work quite well, better than when friends use your professional services, it’s actually quite difficult. I prefer not to go down that path. I actively encourage friends to go elsewhere, because the other way round, you sort of know your footing that your relationship is on.”

### 5.2.3 Task crafting

The third major element in career crafting is task crafting. This section presents evidence on how task crafting helped the participants in designing the activities in their personal and professional life, and how it led to the desired outcomes. Nathan, one of the high level crafters, captured the essence of
task crafting quite well, “I am not big on change for change’s sake, but I am always keen to explore a better way to do things if there is a better way to do things.”

Another high level crafter, Nancy believes that,

> We only get 24 hours in a day, we can only spend it once, and we can never get it back after we spend it, so we better make sure that what we spend it on is the good stuff.

She utilises her time well – “I hate waste of time, if I am just sitting for the kids to finish something or whatever then I will read a book. I am going to get my haircut this afternoon, and colour, that will take two and a half hours, so I will do emails, I will read a book; I can’t just sit there and flip through women’s magazines.”

Whereas, another participant who was rated lower for task crafting seemed to find it difficult to manage time despite having a stay-at-home partner,

> I am just not finding the time at the moment, I have filled it up with more and more work I think... I have sacrificed sleep, many hours of sleep over the years I think.

Based on the prior literature discussion and textual analysis, the following were identified as the main aspects of task crafting:

- Professional activities: routine, developmental, and social;
- Personal activities: family and leisure;
- Community work;
- Selecting tasks to achieve desired outcomes; and
- Balancing both: personal and professional fronts.

**Professional activities**

Participants discussed three types of professional activities – routine, developmental and social. All three were found to be important for achieving professional goals – the routine activities were essential for maintaining performance, developmental activities were extra steps taken by the individuals for furthering their progress, and social activities helped in forming good working relationships which are an integral part of working effectively in organisations.

**Routine activities**

A few representative examples are presented below to demonstrate how routine activities helped the participants in achieving desired outcomes. James believes that one has to keep on doing the tasks on a continuous basis, “What you can control is making sure you tick all the boxes, so the opportunity that comes up for whatever circumstances, then you are ready to go.” He further said, “I
always take work home, and you might take some two-three hours, and you may only do half an hour of it, but it’s just... keep churning.”

George shared that he plans his days according to the workload – “Monday I come here very early, at 6am or something, and then I work on it...” He consciously follows a set plan with his research, “So if you do research, you just can’t focus on one thing because otherwise you’re going to get delayed somewhere, so I normally work on... at the moment I’m working on six papers.”

Virginia has to travel long distance to get to her work, but she has learnt to make good use of this time. Responding to a question about spending time on travelling, she maintained, “It [commuting] gives you chance to do work; I use it as a work time.”

**Developmental activities**

As indicated by the participants’ accounts, the pathways were sometimes paved in the early days of their life, depending on the activities done in university. For example, Sharon shared that, “Three years, the whole time that I was studying, they [IRD] gave me holiday jobs basically, so I always had some guaranteed work instead of picking fruit and doing all that sorts of things that would be alternative”; this proved to be instrumental for her in paving the accounting career pathway early in life.

Likewise, another high level crafter, Sue designed her activities systematically while working towards her degree to achieve her professional goals – “I used to take notes when I was a student, because I was planning on being a lecturer, so I used to take little notes on don’t do what this lecturer does, this one does this really well, she does such and such, so when I became a lecturer I made sure I avoided the things that I thought people did really badly.” This groundwork benefitted her in teaching effectively.

Yvonne believes that her early work experience created the foundation for her present career – “I think just the experience, probably helped doing my degree later in life as I had that life experience, and the overseas experience, and lots of different jobs, different types of people, in different organisations, so I think that set me up really well. I think if I had gone and done this straight from school, I wouldn’t have those skills that I had when I came in as a 30 year old, so that was extremely valuable having that experience before I did it.”

Patrick is not a qualified accountant, but he went the extra length in order to do well a job he was given – “I did go out and I actually did do an audit, because I said if I am going to support these people I want to know how the whole process works.” Nancy wants to become a professional
director, she said, “I am listed with the Ministry of Women’s Affairs; I have put my name forward for the future director’s programme through the IoD [Institute of Directors].”

**Social activities**

Social activities can take different forms, with work associates and with clients. Participants in the accounting firms are expected to engage in the social networking and off-work activities with the clients, like taking them to rugby matches or playing golf with them on weekends etc.

The organisations, whether academia or firms, also make an effort to organise social events for the employees on a regular basis as it has been identified that conducive informal relations with work associates is an integral part of professional life and leads to higher job satisfaction. Arthur enjoys the informal time with his colleagues – “We have social activities, so we’ve morning teas two or three times a semester, Friday night drinks, and then there are other events.”

However, some participants, more so women, are mindful of the time element involved in socialising with people at workplace, as the following comments illustrate:

Yvonne – “Yes, I do [socialise] on occasion; but obviously I have got family outside of work.”

Amanda – “So I try and go to at least half of them like meals. I go to them and that keeps me in touch with the Principals, the other staff and their partners.”

Sue – “I don’t tend to do social sort of things with my workmates. We do stuff at work and then we go home, and we have our own life.”

Angela – “Generally there is Friday night drinks, and I don’t even work Fridays and I don’t live in town anymore, so it’s not really practical to come to that sort of things. I could but I have to make sure that my husband’s home for the kids.”

**Personal activities**

Some of the participants have experienced that being involved in activities outside the workplace has expanded their horizons as well as providing them with other benefits. A few participants, who were actively involved in sport in their early years going back to school/university, said that this involvement has helped them a great deal in connecting to people. As Robert experienced, “It’s been invaluable for relationship building for me. Like on LinkedIn\(^\text{21}\), at least a quarter of the people have come initially through cricket contact, but then later business contact. So cricket is a game where you get to spend a lot of time with other people, and it builds quite strong relationships because of that. Now I have lots of business connections with those people as well.”

\(^\text{21}\) A business-and employment oriented social networking service that operates via internet.
Similarly Scott shared, “One of the things that probably helped is at that time I was playing rugby for club [X], and that probably helps to break the ice in certain circumstances. If you’re just a young kid coming through it makes a little bit harder, but I was probably reasonably well-known to them in terms of rugby at that stage.”

Sports participation had other personal benefits. Martin shared – “I enjoy the running... that provides me with the counterbalance for a sit-down, stressful job.” Similarly Yvonne experienced mental, physical as well as social benefits, “I like to run; I do half marathons on occasion, so I go out running in the morning which is more of a sanity time as well as physical benefits. Twice a week I’ll run with some other friends, we meet up somewhere, and we run together, so there is a social side as well.”

Most of the female participants said that their leisure activities were geared towards their kids. For example, Carol noted, “I have found my life up until this point has been all absorbed with either the children or work. And I am aware that some of those things [hobbies] I have neglected, because I have not felt I had the time to do it.” Similarly Jane admitted – “With my husband being away and the ages of the kids, my time revolves around taking the kids to their activities, so I probably don’t leave myself enough time.” Even female participants with a stay-at-home partner had similar experiences.

However, it was notable that contrary to the gender leisure gap discussed in Chapter 2 (section 2.4.3), where it was indicated that women have less time for leisure than men. Here, some of the male participants also seemed to have less leisure time especially when the children are young. As Sam put it, “Some of that personal stuff goes on the back burner, but as they [the children] get older we can do more with them.” Likewise Keith reminisced, “I used to play golf with my dad, but since the baby’s come along I just have no time, so I have resigned my golf membership.” Robert also changed his lifestyle, “I stopped playing when the children came along basically... because cricket is a long game, it takes a lot of commitment, it’s a young single man’s game, but I’ve never missed it. I guess my biggest hobby would be the things that my children are doing.”

The participants whose children are now older, can afford to spend more time on hobbies. One of the high level career crafters, Daniel has rekindled his interests recently – “For a year or so, it’s been around fitness. I do a lot of running. I am doing half marathon this weekend, but earlier this year I did my first full marathon. I also had my first boxing bout for Easter. I am just in the process of reactivating my pilot’s license, so I can do some recreational flying.”

**Getting outside support**

Particularly for the participants who have children, family responsibilities form a major part of their personal activities. Well thought out planning and thinking around hiring house help and childcare
can facilitate more work-time; however, only four participants mentioned getting outside hired help. Mandy talked about how it helps to have a dummy-mummy in terms of having a nanny for her kids – “At least I can ring Anna and say that I am going to be late, or Anna can you grab this this and this, and can you cook dinner and blah blah blah. She is almost like a home P.A./nanny, and that’s the only way it works.” Similarly, Philip stated, “We have a fantastic nanny for our baby, so we are very lucky. And we have got help with housework.”

**Community work**

This aspect emerged out of the interaction with the participants. Those participants who managed to do community work reported that, it benefitted them in their personal as well as in their professional life. In this sample, the men tend to do community work based on their personal interests, whereas the women tend to do community work around their children’s activities, as the following comments illustrate:

Scott said – “I am on the golf club board as well, and I look after a portion of the...an off-shoot of the Chamber of Commerce.” Similarly Jeremy said – “I am involved with the local rugby here, in an administrative role.”

In contrast, Laura works for BMX, “The kids are involved in BMX, my husband is also involved in BMX, so I do a bit of the stuff for BMX club. I am a treasurer for that.” Similarly Sally – “I am also heavily involved in his [son] scouting group, and fund raising”; and Yvonne – “The toy library was one of the first ones I did when the children were young... the treasurer of the toy library! And now I am on the school board of trustees, I am a treasurer on the board. My ten year old daughter just loves it. It was nice to be involved in the school and be able to contribute because you can’t obviously go and be a parent help because you work, so it takes something like that, it’s a satisfying role.”

Some organisations also actively encourage employees to engage in community work, as Sam said, he has gained personal and professional benefits from this, “The firm sponsored me into the two year programme, so you do that outside of work typically, afternoons off and all that kind of stuff; to be as complete a person as you can. And the best thing about doing that two year programme was to have conversations with people outside of my industry, to do away with groupthink. If you just deal with a bunch of businesspeople, particularly of accounting background, your world is not very rich. If you talk to people who are involved in education, engineering, science, technology, civil services; you actually get a broader perspective. That was amazing. It was what stimulated me most.”

**Selecting tasks to achieve desired outcomes**

Task crafting means performing important and relevant tasks, and also giving some up for better outcomes. For example, Roger changed his behaviour when he realised that – “I stayed here little bit
late at nights, but... try to go home little bit sooner because I’ve just sort of realised that senior management... they treat it as a business, and you are only a piece in the business.” So, he takes his work home and can also spend more time with his family.

Virginia deliberately chooses not to go to overseas conferences; she shared her conscious thought process, “Every conference takes probably three weeks out of your life, by the time you get everything organised to go, and then you go away. If you’re going to Europe you are away from 7 to 10 days, and then by the time you get back, you’re jet lagged, so you’re looking at three weeks, and if you do that three times a year, that’s two months. And you’ve got to decide again what’s important. So it’s my choice not to go.”

Sue reorganised the household duties when she realised, “Someone complained once too much about my cooking, so I said, how come I do all the cooking and all of us except my husband are students and we have got the same sort of workloads? So ever since then everybody’s had a night, so I don’t do all the cooking, I only cook once a week, and everyone’s got chores”. Thus, this way of dealing with the situation also freed her time up considerably, and it has had a big impact on her personal and professional life.

Ruth is very clear about the important activities needed for satisfying her professional goals, “I made a conscious choice, to prioritise research; I cut down on paid contract work. I was doing some staff training courses for the corporate sector and after I had done one or two years I thought it was a complete waste of time, not a waste of time because you got well paid for it, but it sucked up a lot of energy.”

Balancing tasks
As discussed in section 2.5.2, work-life balance was identified as one of the key constructs of personal success. The personal and professional demands on time lead to the challenge of achieving balance. It is very important to have a clear understanding, Daniel was rated high as: “You need to have a life outside work, it’s very very important, to have this differentiation. This is me in-work, this is me out of work”. On the contrary, this participant was rated low, “I think I do balance my life well. I think probably to the detriment of my career path.”

The participants, particularly the married ones with children, have different ways of coping with their various responsibilities, as the following comments illustrate.

Mandy looks after her personal and family needs by consciously following a routine, “I get up at 5 in the morning, at 5.30 I am on the rowing machine for an hour, or I go for a run for an hour and a half.
Sort of 5.30 in the morning that’s my time to do what I want to do.” She further said, “I make sure that I’m there [for the children], and if there’s a mothers’ help in the morning then I go to it.”

Jane has organised her day so that she can balance family and work, “Now I leave here [work] at 2.45pm, and then till 7.30pm it’s family time. I take my daughters to her classes, I pick my son up from school, and then from 7.30 onwards however much work I have got to do, I do.”

Sally found a way around the family responsibilities for going to conferences, “I have taken my family with me twice…… so I could go to Europe to the conferences.” Angela is a primary care giver to her children and she works part-time, she balances her life by, “I find sometimes, to be honest, easier to come here even though I live half an hour’s drive away. It’s easier actually to come here, focus on what I need to and then just go home.” Thus, it can be seen that the participants who have been able to craft their activities managed to achieve the personal and professional goals.

The above discussion elaborated on the different crafting practices and its effect on the desired outcomes. Appendix L.4 presents the indicative information on the overall career crafting practices of participants with regard to gender. These scores have been collated from combining ratings for the different crafting practices of the participants as discussed above. Most of the participants were found to be high career crafters (n = 22), about 11 were rated at the medium level, and three were low level crafters; though it was not found to be related to gender.

5.3. Career crafting triad

It can be observed from the numerous examples discussed above that the three forms of career crafting – cognitive (CC), relational (RC) and task (TC) – are interlinked and interdependent. These connections are presented in the form of a triad, because the idea is that the three elements have to work together in harmony for cohesive effect of career crafting. The following diagram, presented as Figure 5.1, illustrates.

![Figure 5-1 Career crafting triad](image-url)
The association between the three crafting components determines the strength of the triad, which is the level of career crafting. It was observed that a high level of these three crafting practices resulted in high career crafting, and a low level in overall low career crafting. A mixed level of crafting with a high-low combination resulted in variable degrees of overall career crafting. However, even if one or more of the crafting aspects were low and other high, it weakened the whole triad leading to lower level of career crafting. For example, if an individual has a very good understanding of self and has conceptualised career goals accordingly (high CC), but fails to take action to achieve the goals (low TC) and/or negotiate with the key people in his/her life (low RC), the end result will not be a high level of career crafting. For example, this participant was rated low, as:

Yes, I have learnt that education is very important. I did do two stage one papers, and then I didn’t do anymore. It’s probably one of those things; I think it’s easier to do when you come straight out of school. If I actually did have that degree I could go a lot further.

This participant is aware about pursuing education (CC), yet there is no clear plan to do something (no TC) about it by talking to key people (no RC) in the personal and professional life, thus resulting in overall lower level of career crafting and lower level of satisfaction.

Another participant was rated at a lower level, she reported low job satisfaction, “I am an academic which I wanted to be, but I am not in the position where I want to be”. As she comprehended, it was because of not doing the right things required for desired outcomes, “… not having the right networks, not being in the right committees and things like that so… also as women we tend to do things because we think it is the right thing to do. Whereas the men are a bit more… focussed on what they want to do and they shut out the other… the noise. We are stupid, in the fact that we do these extra things.” So there is awareness of the things one should or should not do, but low/no TC and RC resulted in not achieving the desired outcomes.

The following examples are of the participants who are rated as high career crafters as they demonstrated higher levels of CC, TC and RC. It is evident that there was a variable degree in these levels, and accordingly it led to different outcomes for the participants.

When Nathan joined the university to get his accounting qualification after a series of jobs, his wife worked full time so that he could completely focus on the studies.

I could have done a part time [degree] but we made a decision that was probably smarter to just get it done, and power it out. So I was doing ten papers a year, so eight during normal semesters, and then doing two during summer school in both years...
Thus, Nathan conceptualised his career goal of getting accounting qualification (CC), by doing full time studies (TC) after negotiating with his wife (RC) and taking a joint decision of her becoming the primary income earner, thus freeing him from the work responsibilities. This helped him get his qualifications earlier than otherwise what would have taken, and immediately he got a placement with a mainstream accounting firm. His wife then became a stay-at-home partner to look after the kids, but now she works part-time as Nathan has figured out that the intangible benefits of his wife working part-time outweigh the childcare costs – “I think the couple of days a week at work is also good for her, so it’s not baby-talking all the time and things like that. It probably costs us more to send them to child care, and her working for a couple of days than if she is at home.” (CC+TC+RC)

Nathan further shared, “I am sure I can give more to both [work and family] if that was required but the trouble is, it will be at the expense of the other, and I want to try and do the best by everyone.” He tries to deal with this by crafting (CC+TC+RC),

I get up in the mornings, I come into work, I am probably here by 5.45, but I generally go for a run and then I come back here and have breakfast on the floor [office] by 7am. I do try to get home during the week so that I can have dinner with the kids, bathe them or read them a book, put them to bed stuff like that, just help my wife out and the weekends I spend lots of time with my kids.

Thus, Nathan’s coherent crafting practices have resulted in high level of career crafting and desired outcomes; he reported high level of job and life satisfaction.

Mandy, another high level crafter, is very clear about the importance of a good working relationship with her team. In her early career, Mandy had an unpleasant experience with her boss, she recalled, “When I first started my job, there was a woman there I used to report to, who scared the heck out of me, she was so terrifying, and I’d have been 22 or something at that time. I remember thinking back then if I ever get to that position, I’ll never be like that.” Consequently, she learnt what not to do as a superior (CC & TC). “So I’m absolutely committed to a structure in our team that’s flat. Yes, I might be the Principal… this is not about me being up here and you being wherever, my door is always open. If I’m busy, I’ll say I am busy, can you come back in an hour? But it’s always open, I want you to come in and talk to me if there are issues.” She explains that this attitude has helped her develop excellent relationships with her team members (RC).

Career crafting was found to be a cumulative process as it was observed that some participants developed their crafting skills over a period of time. Sally now conducts her personal and professional life in a different way after her previous unpleasant marital experience – “Because of my kind of experience of taking time out of the workforce, my marriage breaking up, you know, I was
quite vulnerable, I had no money... and at this stage [second marriage] you know I was a bit older and I knew if I took time out I would not go anywhere basically... and so I only had short maternity leaves... kind of changed with my second and third child, it was much more focussed on work, because I was going to stay at work. I have been much more stroppy with my [second] husband about [my work]. I have been through all these things before...” (CC+RC+TC)

Roger’s career goal was to be in the field of psychology, but he started on his unplanned accounting track because he practised CC, TC and RC on the way – “When I went to start my psychology degree, I was sent a letter over summer inviting me to take a more advanced accounting class.” He took the course and decided to follow the accounting path as he could see it as a prospective career (CC). “I was working with this big insurance company over summer, I was an intern, and I learned that the power in the organisations was not human resources. I think the power is where accounting, finance and sales, in the insurance company at least it was, and probably accounting and finance I could see as one of the fairly powerful arm to most of these companies, so if I’m going to play that game I might as well play it to the my best abilities, so I’ll do it that way.” Therefore, he thought of getting professional qualification (TC), “There is a CPA [Certified Public Accountant] exam, I should take that because that gives me complete freedom in the sense I get to work for a company or I can work on my own.”

Further, Roger worked as a CFO [Chief Financial Officer] in a small start-up organisation and he was looking to get some CPE [continued professional education]. So he asked his neighbour (RC) who taught at a small four year college, and they had a business school, and the neighbour said, “Why don’t you teach for us? You have a master’s degree and you’d get some of your CPE that way.” So Roger joined them and actually enjoyed teaching and could visualise it as an ideal career (CC). Therefore, he decided to complete his PhD (TC). “It was really my thought, I had no mentor. I had no one that, no family member that could even tell me. This was new, and it was just a matter of looking around and seeing things.”

Thus, Roger has well-utilised these somewhat unexpected turns on the career pathway through his crafting practices. He expressed a high level of satisfaction with his career progression which can be attributed to his cognitive skills. “I think that the challenges are wonderful both places [accounting firm and academia], they are both, intellectually stimulating. I enjoyed my days in practice; I enjoy my days typically here.” Though he agrees that, “You’re better off being the top professional [in firms] in terms of money”, but he never really considered this too deeply because he did not like keeping time sheets in the firm, and, “I think what attracted me to academia was the idea, because it’s more creative in this field, and the flexibility, the idea that I don’t have to be at a place at a certain time, other than classes here, there are some meetings that I have to attend, but a lot of it is
far more flexible and that I think was a big attraction always to me. I’ve always been pretty happy here, they kind of leave you alone here, and let you get on with the work. It’s a very satisfying place to be.”

Another high level crafter, Nancy had to find a new work arrangement to deal with a personal situation. She recalled, “I went to my boss, who is a managing principal, when we were having real troubles with our 15 year old, and I said to him, ‘For a while I have got to cut down to 4 days a week, I can really only do Monday to Thursday, nothing will change. I will still do my required hours, but I need to have Fridays to do errands and stuff like that, so I can be around for my kids on the weekend’. Nancy was all prepared to make a case, but the boss readily accepted her proposal and she could handle the personal and professional fronts with desired outcomes (CC+RC+TC).

Thus, it can be observed from the above discussion that the varying combination of the three crafting practices lead to different career outcomes. As discussed in the previous chapter (section 4.2), serendipity emerged as an important construct that paved career pathways for some participants. Since the objective of this research is to examine the impact of crafting focusing on the individual decisions and actions, it was thought useful to explore how crafters viewed and made most of the fortuitous events in their professional lives. The following discussion examines the association of career crafting and serendipity.

### 5.3.1 Career crafting and serendipity

The interviews explored whether the participants believed that serendipity – accidentally discovering a good career pathway – had played a role in their life and how they viewed this. The concept of career crafting is based on individual agency, proactivity and self-efficacy, so it was important to examine their view of the “chance” aspect of life. Most of the participants who have good crafting abilities acknowledged the small role played by chance events, but felt that their own efforts have made them where they are.

Laura thinks that, “I think there’s a certain amount of luck in your family background, in that my parents were great and they brought us up well, and all that stuff that you can’t control yourself where you are born into. So that’s certainly made a difference, as too I guess you get to a point where hard work pays off I suppose.” Philip affirms – “Life is all about 10% luck, but also having the skills and the drive to take that little luck and push it forward.” Likewise Sam – “I think chance plays a role in things, but in a way you kind of create your own luck by being prepared to think differently and do different stuff, and by being accessible.” He maintained that, “Nothing is a fluke really; sometimes you have to be in the right place at the right time, but you are only there because of the
things you were doing.” This was amplified by Virginia, “Sometimes being in the right place at the right time, yes. A lot I’d think, the choices you make…”

Thus, according to the participants’ accounts, serendipity does not necessarily mean uncontrollability of the effect of the chance event; rather their explanations suggested that career crafting practices can play an instrumental role in transforming these unexpected events into career opportunities. It was also observed that sometimes crafters made chance happen by pursuing an active life that increased the type and level of fortuitous encounters they experienced. Crafting practices seemed to have enabled them to make the most of opportunities that arose unexpectedly from time to time, as the following comments illustrate.

Daniel, for example, talked about a series of coincidences in his life, “The fact that you’re in that situation in the first place because your pilot license has been deferred for a year and you’re there in the first place because there wasn’t any work in city X, and you’re there because you couldn’t fly in country Y, there’s a lot of events that which have occurred that were outside my control…” But with his crafting practices he created new opportunities, and has finally settled in the role of a successful accounting practitioner.

Robert also experienced fortuity in his career, “Luckily the day after I got back, my previous work knew that I was back, they rang me and said, ‘We need some help, would you like a temporary contract?’”, and this set him on a career pathway. However, it must be understood that in situations like these, individual factors seemed to have played an important role too; for instance, the work might have been offered to Robert in the first place because he had proved himself valuable in his previous association with them – with his good work (TC) and maintaining good relationships (RC).

Sally who took the student-tutor-to-academic route admitted, “Well, you can see where I ended up is...I never...I never dreamt. When I first went to university I never would have talked to a lecturer, I would have thought they were like god, and I’d never ever envisage myself as ever being one at all.” Though she never intentionally planned to be an academic, career crafting elements can be seen here. First of all, she decided to make a navigational change by pursuing an accounting degree (CC). Then the university offered her a position as she was thought fit for the role as she was working towards completing the degree, fulfilling the necessary requirements (TC) and shared good relations with people at work (RC).

One of the participants claimed that he landed in New Zealand because of serendipity, “If you would have asked me ten years ago, would you be working in New Zealand, I’d have said, where is New Zealand probably…” But again if the events are analysed, it can be seen that career crafting has played a role. A few years earlier, he probably had built good relations within the university as a
result of attending a conference on campus, so when he decided to relocate for his PhD (CC), he contacted the department (RC) and fortunately they had a position for him, so he could join as a lecturer and also do his PhD (TC) which was mandatory for his career progression. Thus, it is seen that what was termed as serendipity exists to a certain extent, but it also happens because of crafting activities.

5.3.2 Career crafting and demographic factors

One of the objectives of this research was to identify any association between career crafting and demographic factors, specifically gender. Accordingly, a preliminary data analysis was done and the findings were tabulated in order to further explore the phenomenon. Mainly the demographic factors of age, gender, marital status, and parental status were studied (see Appendix L & M). The tables are only used as an indicative data as this is a qualitative study, and the textual data was analysed to further explore the association.

The evidence did not support a strong association between career crafting and the above factors. For example, when we compared the crafting practices of the participants belonging to different age groups, there were no obvious differences with regard to age; the differences were more at the individual level. Similarly gender, marital and parental status did not seem to have a particular association with crafting, across these groups the participants had proportionally similar levels of crafting.

5.4. Career crafting and career clarity

It can be identified from the participants’ accounts that career development largely depended on how clear their thinking was toward their career expectations and outcomes. This theme of career clarity emerged from the participants’ interviews. Career clarity is understood to mean clearness of thought and intelligibility about career direction and goals, in the light of an understanding of self and external factors. According to the participants’ accounts, career clarity is a complex issue and a hazy construct, and people sometimes struggle to formulate career goals as explained below. As stated earlier, this research has taken a holistic approach towards careers encompassing personal and professional life.

As stated before (section 3.6.4), conversations with the participants began with the question – what was your career goal when you were in high school? Initially the researcher had thought that the answer to this question would be dichotomous, a clear or unclear goal. Further investigation revealed that it was a continuum with varying levels of clarity as illustrated below in Figure 5.2:
Accordingly, the respondents were characterised into four categories based on the level of clarity demonstrated by them in the interviews.

- **Not clear (Nil):** They faced a lot of confusion, and did not have a well chalked out pathway. They were open to almost any career option.
  
  Example: “I didn’t really know what I wanted to do, to be honest.” (Angela)

- **Somewhat clear (Low):** These respondents were not really clear about their career path, sometimes the path was prescribed by family.
  
  Example: “I more drifted into it rather than making a conscious decision.” (Carol)

- **Clear (Medium):** The respondents were clear, but not as self-driven and passionate as the category below.
  
  Example: “I pursued accounting as the option.” (Martin)

- **Crystal clear (High):** These respondents were absolutely clear about the career choice from their school/university days and from then on they worked toward the career goal.
  
  Example: “I had wanted to be an accountant since I was maybe ten or so, I had decided it right back then.” (Cheryl)

Career clarity was examined in two contexts – initial clarity and current clarity. This was done with two objectives, firstly to examine if there was any difference between the participants’ initial and current clarity, and secondly to find out whether career crafting facilitated gaining career clarity in later years. Textual data analysis revealed that career crafting (CC, TC & RC) played a central role in gaining career clarity. The main external factors discussed before – family, organisation and environment, also seemed to play an integral role in the formation of career goal and direction for the participants in the study (see Appendix N).

Upon further exploration, it was identified that the younger group had better clarity, again possibly because of the confluence of the above factors. For example, their schools did not have the same restrictions on the choice or offer of subjects as they had for the older participants. The family also seemed to be more supportive of the career choices of the younger participants irrespective of the gender. The social environment is also more accepting of women focusing on careers and delaying
child bearing decisions. Possibly the self is influenced by all these changes resulting in better career clarity.

5.4.1 Initial career clarity

As illustrated below, it was found that those who practised career crafting, and had received unidirectional support from family and school/university did exceptionally well in terms of clarity of goal and progress on the career pathway. Their responses were rated and value coded; Appendix N.1 gives an indication about the clarity of the initial goal.

Crystal Clarity:

Sam, one of the ten participants who had crystal clarity about their initial goal, provides a typical response:

- CC, TC & RC — “I had a pretty clear understanding of work ethic, and the concept that by working hard, that’s how you get ahead, and it was pretty clear to me when I was growing up that if I could use my brain with that work ethic, I could create a life for myself and a life ultimately for my family, that would mean hopefully more certainty, less hard toil, and more time with family.”

- CC — “My heart at the time when I was 16-17, ultimately was into flying helicopters, and skiing. But I was also very conscious that that’s not a long term career goal. So I realised that if I had a tertiary qualification and went into a profession that was well respected and had been around for centuries that would always provide a good platform for career branching wherever I wanted to go, that would be sensible.”

- School — “I studied accounting at school, so I had a pretty strong numbers and rational analytical stream of study at school, and an incredible teacher.”

- Family — “I was heavily influenced by my grandparents and my parents, both were incredibly hard working, my grandfather particularly with his brain, and my mum and dad more so with their brawn.”

Thus, the right confluence of crafting practices, family and school support facilitated Sam with greater clarity in forming initial career goal. He has steadily progressed on the same pathway, and is a highly successful partner in his accounting firm at a relatively young age (30-39 age group).
Nil Clarity:

Participants who were rated at nil/low on the scale of career crafting struggled with forming an initial goal. This was found to be mainly a result of lack of self-understanding, perhaps reinforced by a non-supportive family and school background. For example, Keith found it very hard to formulate a career goal as there was a big pressure to join the family business which he did not want to do – “Retrospectively I think what I was thinking, there were so many other things I could have done, and different paths I could have taken, but my thinking was so narrowed.”

5.4.2 Current career clarity

The current career clarity of the participants was also measured. Appendix N.2 presents information which shows that career crafting plays an important role in gaining current career clarity. Family and organisational support appeared to be an integral part of the process as well. Comparing current clarity with the initial career clarity, it was identified that most of the participants had better clarity about their current career. This could be because of experience, possibly making mistakes at times but learning from them. George observed, “I think we become more wise, and realise. I think in the beginning I was much more focussed on work, now I realise probably not the best idea, I give more time to myself now.”

High level of career crafting leads to high clarity

Sharon recalled how she chose the accounting route, “I didn’t really come into accounting until I was in my last year at school when I actually did it as a subject, and found that I really kind of talked to it and enjoyed it” (CC). She has made a good progress on the pathway, and it is mainly by, “Just taking the opportunities when they come along and doing something that you are good at really.” (TC)

Sharon is aware of her personal and professional roles, “I was working in that pseudo partner role for quite a long time, particularly the time I was having the children, and having bits of time off for parental leave and the like and working part time. I didn’t really feel like I could go to for partnership while the children were very young.” This was a conscious decision as, “I probably delayed it in terms of sort of fitting the kids in and then doing the right thing in my mind and in terms of the partnership commitment I could provide, because it is quite a change from being an employee to being an owner.” (CC, RC & TC)

She appreciated spousal support, “Well, my ex-husband was full time at home with the children, the whole time; he is still actually a full time care giver for them. I have to give him credit for that; that was really a major part of the support for me being able to have done what I have done. I am not sure that had he been a big career person as well, I necessarily would have quite taken the same
path. But it was also around the fact that I could earn more, but we also sort of both felt that it was going to be better for us as a family to just have someone at home full time.” She further reported that, “We have been separated for a while now, but he still is a full time carer for the children, and whilst he doesn’t have children all of the time, he does an enormous amount of those arrangements in terms of supporting. So we have quite a good arrangement from that perspective.” (RC)

Sharon has actively built professional relationships and it has helped her. “The flexibility that I was afforded by the partners that I worked with them in X firm meant that I pretty much defined how I worked and what I did”. She is very clear about her future goals, and wishes to continue with the same firm as, “I just think that this kind of environment has provided the flexibility and it just enables you to do the job really well without having the extra pressures. When I have issues I have got tax specialists who I can bring in, and then I have got the auditors who can come in and help us with an issue.”

**Low level of career crafting leads to low clarity**

A few participants seemed to lack a clear understanding about their current career. Though dissatisfied in the present situation, they were not really able to determine future career goals, as a result of low level of clarity. Their comments demonstrated lack of cognitive crafting. One participant is still not clear about herself – “I did apply for a couple of other jobs, which I didn’t get. It’s interesting enough because one of the people said to me, “I think you will be bored in this job”, which I possibly could have been. They obviously didn’t feel I was right for the job, and I probably wasn’t.”

Another one expressed not having a clear picture of her future (low CC). It can be seen from her comments that she is not happy with her current career but does not know what to do to change it, as she admitted, “I wouldn't be here; I would be probably working at a university or an organisation like that, possibly in an 8.30 to 5 job, if such a thing exists...” Thus, the picture is still hazy for these participants. It must be noted that they all reported not feeling well-supported by their family and organisation.

**How career crafting (CC + TC+ RC) facilitated changing low initial career clarity to high current career clarity**

There was found to be a marked difference between initial and current career clarity of some of the participants, and this appeared to be because of career crafting. To illustrate, Michael and Keith, for whom the picture was initially hazy, have now found a highly satisfying career pathway. Both were rated low for their initial career crafting, but they have done CC+RC+TC over the years, and seem to
have achieved desired outcomes. For example, Keith is very clear about his current and future career, “What I want to focus on is not kind of those, boxes on your CV to tick. What I am more interested in now is getting the balance right, reducing the amount of time I spend on teaching to an appropriate level, and making sure I have got enough time for my family and friends.”

Thus, validating the career crafting triad, the above discussion confirms that strong connections between cognitive, task and relational crafting lead to high level of career crafting. This also brings out the role played by career crafting in achieving desired outcomes which is another main objective of this research (Research Questions 6). This is further explored below.

5.5. Career crafting and personal success

The earlier discussion (section 2.5) argued the paradigm shift from the traditional system of objective success mainly measured in terms of the position and salary, to something more individually rewarding in terms of the subjective success. The objective career has visible elements of position, salary and other observable symbols. In contrast, elements of the subjective career are less visible, and are more connected with a personal sense of career like meaning in the job, perception, attitudes, orientation, and satisfaction one derives from it. Understandably, the subjective career changes in time, in the context of social expectations, individual values and interests, and environmental changes at large.

This research measures the outcomes of various career decisions from the participants’ points of view, understanding how they view their life in terms of the different constructs of personal success, which includes both objective and subjective success, and then links them with their career crafting practices. It focuses on people’s own evaluations of their lives, which was revealed through the interviews as well as their response to the item of job and life satisfaction in the data sheet. Ruth, for example, commented on this vividly, “Happiness is hopeless, you can’t make other people happy, if you are happy yourself, that’s very much your own choosing. Other people don’t make you happy...” Virginia asked, “So is progression measured by title, or what is actually progression measured by?” She defined success as “We’ve got enough that we don’t have to worry about the bills coming in or putting food on the table, so really what more do you want?”

Satisfaction is a very important construct for this study; how satisfied the participants feel with their professional and personal life is proposed as one of the vital indicators to measure personal success. Since position in the organisation is a traditional marker for objective success, an initial investigation was made to examine the association of personal success with the participants’ position in the organisation in Table 5.1.
As it can be seen, a majority of the participants perceive themselves as successful. It was identified that most of the participants at the highest level in the organisation – Partner in case of firms and Professor in case of academia – reported a high level of satisfaction confirming the association between subjective and objective success found in the literature (section 2.5).

However, there were also some participants who were at lower positions in organisations, reported high levels of satisfaction. The study tried to explore this further by identifying the crafting practices of the participants reporting different levels of satisfaction. It appeared to be related to the career goals of the individuals and how they felt about their “personal” success, in essence, high level of career crafting. For example, Michael changed his life completely when he realised that,

I always felt like I was wasted in my life to be honest… I quite enjoyed it [the corporate job], but again it came back this recurrent thing that I just wasn’t fully satisfied.

So he made a radical decision, resigned his high paying, high-level job, and enrolled in the University for a degree, “I took a pay drop to come here, a relatively significant pay drop, but I wouldn’t have any other way. I have never been motivated by money; it’s just not the thing for me.” On completion of his degree, he was offered an academic position in the same department. Currently, he is at the second from the bottom rung of the position ladder having made the career shift late in life, but he is extremely happy at having accomplished his personal goal, and therefore he was rated high for achieving personal success.

An array of factors in combination affect these decisions, and the significance of each varies from one person to the other. To illustrate this, here are examples of two female participants who have a similar profile. They belong to the same age group, have similar family and educational background, with positive spousal and organisational support; but have different approaches to career development. They both were crystal clear about their initial career goal – at the age of ten, they had decided they wanted to be Chartered Accountants. However, now Cheryl wishes to focus on her
career for the next few years delaying the decision of child-bearing, whereas Alice is happy to be at the same professional level to balance it with the personal decision of having a family. They both are rated at high level of career crafting because of the clarity of thought about their career goals, personal and professional relationships, and the tasks they perform in order to achieve the desired outcomes. They both reported high level of satisfaction in job and life.

Thus, participants appeared to have different views and strategies as they integrated personal and professional goals. Desired outcomes varied from person to person as was reflected through their comments. Most participants did not describe success along one dimension only; their views encompassed multiple aspects of life in workplace and beyond. As might be expected, though definitions of success were varied, a high level of consistency was found across some of the themes.

It was identified that having satisfaction in professional and personal life was a top marker for success. To elaborate, job satisfaction, autonomy, flexibility, work relationships, concerns like being a good parent, having enough time for kids, experiencing family happiness, personal concerns of health, work-life balance, successful work and family relationships, and particularly for women, being able to manage both the work and family fronts, figured prominently in the list.

It was also found that the meaning of success changes over time, as people progress in age. Status quo seemed to be a common strategy for the older generations wherein they wanted to balance work and family, and also achieve their personal goals. Thus, based on the textual data analysis the main constructs of personal success are illustrated in Figure 5.3:

**Figure 5-3 Personal success**

Responses were analysed for patterns and themes to identify any notable differences between different levels of crafting. The following sections discuss the role played by career crafting in achieving personal success.
5.5.1 Professional sphere

The textual data analysis revealed that the level of satisfaction in the current role is an important indicator for a career decision to continue on the same pathway or to navigate to create a new pathway. It was identified from participants’ accounts that securing a desired position, meaningful job, higher level/title, salary, autonomy and independence, time flexibility, challenging work, building a good team, and career progression contributed to satisfaction in the professional sphere. Different individuals have different criteria for rating satisfaction. For example, as stated in the previous chapter (section 4.2.2) ten of the 15 academics had shifted to the academia for autonomy and time flexibility though compromising salary. Whereas, the two participants who were working in the government sector shifted to firms for higher salary and career opportunities. For most of the women participants, time flexibility was an important factor that contributed to career decisions.

Position was crucial for this academic participant, “Oh, very important [the title of Professor]. Because when they were not going to give it to me, they were going to give me more pay or something but not give it to me, and my head of school or someone said to the dean, ‘--- will not be interested in any more money, --- wants the title, not the money’. Similarly, title was important to Virginia and she felt unhappy when she did not get an expected promotion, but now she is satisfied with her changed outlook. “I got so sick towards the end of last year and I sat down and realised that yes, I’d like to be associate professor, but no, I am not going to kill myself getting there. So how important actually is the title? And I have discussed this with my husband, we’ve decided the money is better than the title... also here I’ve the respect, I have the autonomy.”

For Ruth, success is in getting high PBRF ratings, her goal is, “Next step for me, I want to get an A in the next PBRF round, I got a B, I have always been in a B. I want to get an A and I know how to do that.”

Ryan explained what led him to accounting academia, “Well, the firm that I was working for, had a large proportion of their partners who had postgraduate qualifications, mainly master’s degrees. I thought if I am going to progress in the firm to partnership, I should make sure that I get postgraduate qualification myself, so the job came up which would enable me to work as a lecturer, but also do my postgraduate qualification at the same time.” Then he worked as a part-time lecturer which he enjoyed, so he decided to make the shift, “You have the luxury of being able to follow your nose a bit and spend a bit more time on topics [doing research], delve into areas in much more detail than you can have in the profession. It was a quality of life choice as well, and having a bit more flexibility about your day to day work life.” He reported high satisfaction having made the shift.
Daniel enjoys the different aspects of his role as a Partner, “It’s a fantastic role, the ability to make a difference. We’ve employed 167 graduates nationally in February, and they all come in and they all are keen and a bit raw and it’s good to see how they progress.” He also seems to thrive on the dynamic nature of his profession, “So there is continual change and there is lots of reading, but that’s also part of the attraction of the profession is that you are continually changing, and I’ve got a fairly low boredom threshold, and tax paying is a constantly changing area, means that there is the ability to continuously grow, and not get bored.” On the contrary, this participant who reported low job satisfaction and was rated low for career crafting, had this to say, “I am finding it... or whether my brain is too full I don’t know. But sometimes these new things come up and you go- oh, my god, it makes my head hurt, how am I going to...I think the whole change thing is just continually evolving here. Sometimes I feel like I am not keeping up with change as well as I should be.”

Sam has improved his relationship with his workplace team by empowering them for better outcomes, “I am trying to get my people to become thinkers and think about things conceptually, ideas, what they think the answers might be as opposed to trying to be these people who just churn out what people have done before them.” Similarly, Patrick shared, “I try and allow them to make the decisions a lot more and they find it refreshing. I give them a bit more freedom.”

Jane observed that to deal with the negative comments at the workplace, “You just have to have a thick skin...” Keith’s life is less stressful after he has adjusted his outlook upon realising that, “I think to do the job what I’ll consider well, you probably have to spend 50% of your time on teaching, I probably have a tendency to spend 60% or 70% of my time on teaching, so that’s where the issue is...”

Martin, one of the participants who reported high satisfaction, has consciously chosen his pathway. He is aware that, “I perhaps don’t have much ambition because of my background etc. I have always seen myself perhaps as a worker, I am not an ideas person. I have never been too adventurous; I am not a risk taker. I mean we can’t all be up there go getters, you still need people to oversee work... I guess I have not been pursuing the career more, because I think it does overtake. I feel I am stressed enough without going further...”

Four participants reported lower levels of job satisfaction. It seems that the common factors were unclear career goal, low self-awareness, low family support (orientation and procreation), and low organisational support (school and now workplace). They also scored lower on the career crafting scale. This seems to have led to overall low satisfaction as they are not driven or engaged in the present job. For example, Angela recalled, “I didn’t really know what I wanted to do to be honest. That was just one of those tricky things, I didn’t really think that I was the type of person to go to university, probably didn’t think I was intelligent enough to go.” She does not seem to be too happy.
in the current job, “I struggle with this job a little bit. To be honest I am probably at a point where I probably would like something different, something with more of a social slant.” She did apply for a few positions but did not get them. Besides, family responsibilities and husband’s career indecisions has meant status quo, “Then my husband looked at changing as to what he was doing, so I was quite a bit stuck at what I was doing. Then you’ve got one person doing what they are doing, and my husband still is at that point where probably he needs to look at changing his career.” She thinks, “I do balance my life well... probably to the detriment of my career path” (emphasis added).

It can be seen from the above discussion that career crafting has enabled participants to achieve desired outcomes in the professional sphere. The following section examines how the participants have fared in their personal life, and whether career crafting has played a role in increasing satisfaction by changing the cognitive aspects of it, by redefining the view of relationships, and by restructuring the tasks at hand.

### 5.5.2 Personal sphere

It was identified from their accounts that participants valued varied aspects of their personal life. For example, a desired outcome for Scott is having good health along with the other dimensions, “I have never got myself into a situation where I have become under a pressure health wise because I’ve over-worked.” A high level crafter in this research, Mandy is at the top position in her firm; she does not wish to scale further heights. She shared that spending time with children is highly fulfilling for her. “It takes you back, you’re almost reliving your childhood again through them, and I get huge pleasure out of going through that sort of stuff.”

Ruth said, “I value my leisure time terrifically. Gardening, my local community, going to movies with friends, my favourite TV programmes. I walk down to work and I walk home from work, I love it.”

Appendix O.2 presents information about career crafting and life satisfaction. An attempt was made to separate participants who reported a high level of satisfaction to explore what they did that was different to understand the process and whether career crafting practices lead to personal success.

**Cognitive crafting**

There are various ways in which the participants used cognitive crafting – understanding what is satisfaction, identifying the causes of dissatisfaction if any, and finding ways of getting satisfaction. Roger knows that if he relocated to the USA he would gain financially, but he has opted for the quality of life in New Zealand, “I know they’d pay me more money, now never really considered too deeply because, I’ve always been pretty happy here... to have the ocean and the mountains so close, and have it just so uncongested, having so unpopulated... it’s quite nice.” Ruth shared how she
benefitted when she took a decision of relocating, “I was in the old family home and I shifted two years ago to a little house which I really enjoy, so I have what they call downsized.”

Virginia acknowledges that, “I can’t have flash holidays overseas every year, and we can’t do this and that. But really we’ve got enough that we don’t have to worry about the bills coming in or putting food on the table, so really what more do you want?”

**Relational crafting**

Relational crafting means understanding and managing relationships with important others to achieve the desired outcomes. It was identified that it also means managing relationship with self. For example, one of the participants shared, “There are some people who just can’t be by themselves, who need constant friend contact and have to be doing something every single night, but for me it’s the opposite. Because of the way that I am, I don’t want or need a lot of friends, so I am quite happy sitting at home with my cats and watching TV and going to sleep.” According to the career crafting principle, this participant was rated at a high level because there is awareness of what one wants in life, and acting accordingly (CC, TC & RC) leads to desired outcomes.

For most participants who have children and who do not have a supportive stay-at-home spouse, it was found that the children were the first priority; a representative sentiment by Mandy explains it well. She said, “For me it really does come down to the kids – are they getting the time they need?” This view was expressed by some of the male participants also. Daniel, for example, has to share the responsibility of caring for his children after the separation; he seemed to have managed it very well as his comments illustrate, “My relationship with my children is much stronger than it has been in the past. It’s not all plain, it’s quite challenging. Because I am their sole care giver every second week, that means during that time I spend a lot more time with them.”

Sally commented on how it is a continuous process of understanding and negotiating, “We [she and her husband] are working out... we work out new kind of boundaries all the time I think.” Sue said, “He [husband] is learning; I am getting him trained. Every now and then he reverts back to the traditional roles, but I’ve got him fairly well trained.” Thus, it can be seen that through conscious thinking and negotiating, relational crafting has led to desired outcomes for these participants in the personal sphere.

Relational crafting does not just mean having good relationships with people around you, it is also important to select and nurture relationships with people who matter, and to be aware that it is a constant process of working and reworking. As Nathan commented, “You can’t make everyone happy all the time. So there is always going to be things...”
**Task crafting**

As elaborated earlier, task crafting is about selecting and performing the tasks to achieve desired outcomes. Nathan feels satisfied with his life, he shared his recipe for success. “If you actually want to succeed in life and get ahead, you actually need to focus on the things that you don’t do well, and improve them or fix them.”

Task crafting also depends on personal and family circumstances. Mandy is a high level crafter, but she is not able to free her time up as her children are still young, “But in the future when the girls are not so demanding, they are doing their own thing, and I’m not a taxi service, there might be enough that I need to be able to do that.” Laura’s children are a bit older, she shared how she managed the responsibilities, “We [she and her husband] deliberately chose a school that they [children] could walk to and most things [they do] are local.” This has considerably reduced the responsibilities of picking up and dropping off kids for various activities.

**5.5.3 Managing both spheres**

The above discussion has discussed how participants find satisfaction in personal and professional spheres. As stated before, conceptualising and prioritizing work and home activities is important since time, the most important resource at disposal, is fixed. Indeed, as commented by Waring (1996, p. 88), “Time is the one unit of exchange we all have in equal amounts, the one investment we all have to make”. Thus, it is a mutual and collaborative process where it was observed that participants achieved personal success by managing both spheres. The external factors of family, organisation and environment play an important role, but as per the career crafting principle, it also depends on the thought process, decisions and actions of individuals that lead to desired outcomes in both spheres.

**The challenge**

Some of the participants, typically female, gave comments like Sarah’s view, “There are still pressures that make it difficult to balance life and family. It is easier just to focus on career, and not to have family.” Despite having a supportive, stay-at-home partner, Sally admitted that having three children and a full time career is quite hard: “Reality is now I work very long hours, I am feeling tired all the time.” Similarly, Virginia admitted to having no time for herself: “Probably in the last 6 months I’ve decided, well it’s about time I spend some time for me, but up until then my personal life has been very much non-existent. It’s only been work, family...”

Most participants experienced that it was a struggle to manage when their children were younger. Yvonne accepted that, “It’s a juggle, you can’t always make the time for that [career] because you’ve got other commitments at home, so sometimes you do feel like that, you’re not quite giving as much
as you should but then you’re sort of torn in two different ways.” Mandy, who is identified as a high-level crafter in the study, is very conscious of her role as a mum and the current demands on her time (CC, TC, RC), “When the kids are a bit older, they are doing their own thing, then you can step up. But right now I’ll feel like I’d have failed as a mother if they grow up thinking we hardly ever saw mum, she was always working.”

Likewise, Sam admitted that – “It’s a constant challenge, partly because of my career drive. There won’t be anything in my diary that’s beyond 5 o’clock on Monday but it won’t be till 9 o’clock that I get home, because there is so much stuff that needs to get done.” Thus, Sam is aware of not getting the balance right, but he and his family are also aware of the trade-off, “But equally too we have the lifestyle we have because of the work I do, so the kids and my wife are really supportive of that.”

Sometimes it goes out of balance purely because of individual perception, as Keith admitted, “Initially I didn’t think that, so I worked ridiculous hours, self-imposed, not anyone forcing me to and I am still trying to get out of that habit. I still tend to put too much effort into teaching.”

Thus, this is a personal issue, and individuals have different ways of understanding and managing it. There are various crafting practices with which people seemed to have managed their professional and personal life as was identified from the interviews.

**How career crafting can help manage both the spheres**

Mandy commented on how being aware of the challenge is important, “I think it’s something you constantly work at; it’s not something you can set and forget. You acknowledge that there might be periods when you’re not balancing it so well, but as long as you’re aware of that, and you take steps to correct it.”

Robert thinks of success as being able to manage both worlds:

> My wife being a school teacher is on holidays at the moment, so I just took a day’s annual leave, and we just drove up to a winery and had a nice lunch. So I get huge amount of enjoyment, battery recharging by doing simple things like that.

Participant crafters managed this challenge in two main ways – by separating or integrating personal and professional spheres. As identified by Zerubavel (1991), it was recognized that some participants used the strategy of work-home-segmentation, wherein they preferred to keep the two domains as separate as possible, creating and maintaining a boundary or mental fence. For example, Daniel (CC) achieved it consciously – “You need to have a life outside work, it’s very very important, to have this differentiation. This is me in-work, this is me out of work.”
Similarly, Patrick is mindful of his weekend time (CC, RC) as family time, “When I get to do a Friday night, I try and make a conscious effort that I will not do any work over the weekend.” Accordingly, he has set the expectations (TC), “I won’t take calls on weekends, and unless I’m supervising a project I will not attend any calls after pretty much 6 o’clock on a Friday night.” Virginia admitted, “I am working hard at trying to say no [to work things]. When I am out of here, anytime I do have, I like to spend it with my family, as there’s so little of it…”

Conversely, some participants have integrated elements of both domains by having permeable or non-existent boundaries (Ashforth, Kreiner, & Fugate, 2000). James shared that (CC, TC), “I always take work home, and you might take some 2-3 hours, and you may only do half an hour of it, but it’s just… keep churning.” Sue recalled her experience of going back to university to pursue her accounting degree when her children were young – “It took me five years to get my bachelor’s part time. It was like they [the children] almost lived here [university], and we used to sometimes have meals in the cafeteria, and I’d go off to a tutorial, and they would play around, talk to the café ladies, and I’d come back again.”

Cognitive crafting behind managing the relationships and tasks impacts the understanding of the renewed roles. Yvonne has a supportive stay-at-home partner who works part-time. They have made certain role adjustments for a supportive arrangement (CC+TC+RC),

> My husband cooks, he cooks during the week, and then I take over at the weekend. I do the laundry in the morning; my husband brings it in and folds it. We’ve got into a nice routine and I know that my husband is there after school, and he looks after the homework, and I am there on the weekends. I don’t think that I am missing out on anything, you’ve got the right support, like we’ve got the cleaner that comes and cleans the house.

Amanda plans to reverse the work-family arrangements (CC+RC+TC) for a better balance, “I have been kind of supporting my husband for quite a while… while he has been studying, so the plan is that he will work 20 hours, get a bit more paid work, and I will ease back, a bit more of life style thing now. Well, I am just over 50 now, and would rather go more sideways and more just have a job that’s actually less hours, probably next few years.”

Participants with older children, in particular female participants, now find it easier to manage. Carol admitted, “I think I am better at it now, and again it’s probably because the children are older… probably just even a few years ago, totally out of balance.” Similarly, Ruth now finds it easier to manage the balance being on her own, “It’d be different if I had children. Tuesday night I went home, had a snack, and then I drove down here at 5.30 and worked quite late into the night.” Mary echoed, “I am in a different stage now because my children are older.”
Chapter 2 (section 2.4) had discussed how women’s primary role as a child-carer influenced their career trajectories, where Theresa Gattung was quoted, “I knew I could not get to the top and have children” (Gattung, 2010, p. 237). In the same vein, a female participant shared how she has set the priorities, “No children but a dog. My husband would like to have children, but at the moment I am focussed on my career, so I have no plans of having children in the near future.”

Nancy is a high level crafter, her comments on the often talked about topic of glass ceiling for women achievers are significant. She is well aware that family and career can be a struggle, but she thinks it is a matter of choosing and preparing well.

I do think that this glass ceiling is perhaps something women impose on themselves. They come to a point, when they want to have babies, and then it’s like I can only have one or the other, I can’t have both... Whereas I have always been how do I get to have both, and that’s what I have done.

Similarly, Philip and his wife work full time, and they have a young baby, he is aware that, “It depends on good support network at home. There has to be an equal sharing of the commitments, particularly around family.”

Thus, it can be observed that career crafting played an important role in managing personal and professional spheres, which led to personal success for the high level crafter participants (see Appendix O.3). The following section synthesises the hitherto discussion and presents the career crafting paradigm comprising the central role of individuals incorporating the external factors, and personal success that covers professional and personal spheres.

### 5.6. Career crafting paradigm

This paradigm of career crafting presented below (Figure 5.4) explains the intricate relationship between career crafting, external factors and desired outcomes while capturing the essence of the approach. It is not presented as an equation or a formula but as an explanatory mechanism.

Maxwell (2004) observed that causal explanation, from a realist perspective, involves the development of a theory about the process being investigated, a process that will rarely be open to direct observation in its entirety. Further, Bernard and Ryan (2010) recommended that while building models three factors should be considered – identifying key concepts, linking key constructs and testing that the relationship holds for at least the majority of the cases being modelled; as explained below.
It has been identified from the numerous examples that career crafting is a continuous process of understanding, exploring, discovering, and reforming. It is an individual and voluntary process, where the external factors of family, organisation and environment are influential; but the level of the career crafting practices played a key role in getting desired outcomes. For example, some participants shared a similar personal and professional background, but they have attained different outcomes. The argument is that these outcomes are different because of their crafting skills. The central principle is that career crafting mitigates the negative impact of the adverse situation, utilises the opportunities provided by the positive changes, or creates new opportunities. Thereby, desired outcomes mainly depend on the way individuals manage a situation with their career crafting skills. The foregoing discussion demonstrated that career crafting is an enabler; this relationship between the different components is illustrated in Figure 5.4.

![Figure 5-4 Career crafting paradigm](image)

Career crafting triad (see Figure 5.1) established the key relationship between the three crafting practices – cognitive, task and relationship. It was evident that these practices impacted on the career outcomes confirming the agentic role played by individuals. However, an individual is surrounded by the external factors of family, organisation and environment; these three are interlinked and they affect each other in different ways. There is a mutual, reciprocal relationship
between an individual and the outer world. The extent of career crafting manages these factors to a certain extent, and the career crafting effort is also partly determined by these factors.

For example, the phenomenon of greater number of women joining the professional ranks has changed the family structure with more men taking up the role of primary care taker of the family, and it has also made organisations aware of the gender issues. These changes have in turn influenced the societal norms about the roles men and women play inside and outside of homes. Similarly, changing environment and organisational policies have made more women aware of the career opportunities, and it has resulted in a paradigm shift in the view of their duties towards their families and their careers. Thus, these external factors have an effect on the other factors, and on the individuals.

The analysis confirmed that individuals have freedom to take decisions (to a certain extent) for desired outcomes, however this may vary from person to person. These outcomes were termed as personal success, incorporating personal and professional life spheres (see Figure 5.3). Thus, the ultimate objective is conceptualising ideal career goal, and working towards it to manage personal and professional life spheres in such a way that everyone involved in the process, directly or indirectly, benefits from these decisions.

As hitherto discussion has established, 36 participants of this study have adopted different career pathways, and they have demonstrated that different levels of career crafting result in different outcomes. Understandably, each story is unique, yet certain similarities can be found with regard to individual qualities and profiles, family backgrounds, organisations, and environment. Therefore, for the purpose of explaining the career crafting paradigm, some common situations were identified that cover the broad spectrum of participants; the following four cases illustrate.

1. **High career crafting, excellent support by family and organisation, and conducive environment lead to a crystal clear pathway**

Six participants belonged to this category. To illustrate, Cheryl had decided at the age of ten that she would become a Chartered Accountant. This was mainly possible because of the constructive family support. She recalled, “I had an obsession with money and I loved counting money and doing all that sort of stuff. So my father said you should be an accountant.” Her parents were proactive about introducing her to the practical world, “Those meetings that I always went to with my parents were always about tax, and looking at their financial statements. So mum and dad used to sit down and explain things in the financial statements to me, so that’s why I took an interest.” So right through her school she did accounting, and at university she pursued the same path along with a part time
job in an accounting firm. “I am quite a detailed organised person so I had my days mapped out. And my intention was always to be a Chartered Accountant.”

Cheryl further reported how she consciously chose her first full time job, “I had four job offers; I went through and worked out which firm that I related to more, and what I valued more.” This helped her choose well, as she is still with the same firm. “They are very flexible with whatever you would like to do in terms of how you’d like to approach the work. I prefer the people, the group, and the opportunities that you have got nationally.” Cheryl has steadfastly progressed on the pathway, she keeps herself updated by, “I read as many things as I can, I go on training courses, and I also am a trainer.”

She is clear about her future professional goals, “The next step is a director, and after that as a partner. But at this point in my life I don’t aspire to be either of those. I am happy where I am at the moment. I just prefer to... at each level get enough knowledge until I feel comfortable to move forward. I don’t have a set goal in my mind that I want to be a partner by 2030 or anything like that. I just take it as it comes until I feel confident in my knowledge.” And she is clear about her personal goals too, “My husband would like to have children, but at the moment I am focussed on my career, so I have no plans for having children in near future”. Thus, high cognitive, task and relational crafting skills supplemented by the exceptional support from her family (of orientation and of procreation) and organisation have resulted in her achieving personal success.

2. Medium-high career crafting with general family support, medium organisational support, and environmental opportunities lead to discovery of pathways

A majority of participants (n = 18) were identified as belonging to this category. For example, Philip could not conceptualise a career pathway after high school. He had general family support, “I used to talk to my parents a lot. They always said, ‘keep your options open, don’t sell yourself short’. So they were always encouraging. I guess that’s probably the best advice I have ever had I think, was to try and do the best thing that you can do.” He did not get support from his school, “I remember in the final year at high school we had a career advisor. I don’t recall them being particularly helpful, all I recall is being given pamphlets.”

However, Philip talked about how the good advice at the university helped him, “At the university level, I remember going and talking with the career advisor person and that was when I was thinking about what subjects I should be taking and what my options were, they were very helpful.” But he still was not clear about his pathway, so he kept studying (TC), invested six years, and got three degrees, basically leaving his options open in terms of what he wanted to do (CC). As he says, “I started off doing a law degree and a BA majoring in English Literature, and then I started to think, I
am not actually sure whether I want to be a lawyer and then I started thinking about...I had done the
tax paper and I thought actually I had quite enjoyed that, and so I started to think about what else
can I do, what goes well with a law degree, and I thought commerce and accounting would go well
and I could cross credit papers across towards the accounting qualifications.” Then he joined IRD,
which was a good decision as – “One good thing about the IRD was that they were very happy to pay
for further education, support you with further study.” So he got the legal and accounting
professional qualifications as well as the practical experience while working for them.

He followed his parent’s advice of ‘keep your options open’, which considerably broadened his base,
and then he came to a stage where he was in a position to conceptualise his ideal career – “I think
tax to me seemed to be the area where we seem to have the best combination of legal and
accounting.” He also benefitted from IRD’s support, his crafting skills seemed to have helped him in
garnering this support, “I negotiated the trade-off with IRD; I will come and do this role for twelve
months if you let me go away for three months.” He also acknowledged getting good support from
his current firm, when he was seconded to Sydney and to Melbourne as there were opportunities to
go to Australia because of his expertise in GST.

Hence, it can be seen that he has very carefully developed his core competency, and finds that “there
is a huge amount of enjoyment” in the job as he has achieved his desired outcomes. He and his wife
both work full-time, but they manage the work-life balance quite well, “We have a fantastic nanny
for our baby, so we are very lucky. And we have my wife’s good family support, we have got help
with housework, and we also have flexibility at work.”

Thus, though Philip did not start off on a clear career pathway, his high level of crafting practices and
general family and organisational support helped him discover a pathway. This slow and steady
process of career development created a solid foundation for him; he reported high level of job and
life satisfaction.

3. Challenging family background, medium organisational support and dynamic
environment managed successfully with high career crafting

My CV looks like a patchwork quilt.

-Daniel

Daniel has done a variety of jobs. Every time he faced a challenge, he invented a new pathway and
succeeded. The following discussion documents why he should be rated as a high level career crafter
in this study.
Daniel’s passion and childhood dream was, “All I wanted to do was fly planes; it’s all I wanted to do since I was about five. My father wanted me to do a commerce degree as a backup, because he said you won’t fly planes.” He completed both, a commerce degree as well as got a pilot’s license. He was not willing to give up his dream, but realised that, “For flying there are no opportunities in New Zealand, basically we produce a lot of things way ahead of the rest of the world. On a per capita basis New Zealand produces way too many pilots. The only way of getting a job is to sit around and hope that somebody retires, or go overseas”. So at the age of 22, Daniel decided to go overseas [Southeast Asian country] on a one-way ticket. It was not a completely random decision, as “I had a friend who was flying over there for the academy, and also I had grown up in South-east Asia, when I was a child I went to a school in that country, so that’s the part of the world which I love.” Once there, he sat outside the Principal of the flying academy’s office, all day every day for five days, because he had no appointment and the officer wouldn’t give him one. “So I’d sit outside his office for 8 hours a day, and my back up plan which was developing while I was sitting there, was, well, I’ll go back, and if I don’t get this job, I’ll go back to New Zealand and I’ll do master’s in taxation, a tax qualification.” But his perseverance paid, and he got the job. While he was there he also completed his CA, he had the required work experience because he had worked throughout the time at the university, which meant that he could sit for the qualifying exam for CA while he was outside of New Zealand. He was in that country for a couple of years, and had a job lined up with a small Airline, which was the next step in progression, but that job fell through and there was no possibility of flying. But at the same time he met his wife, they got married and moved to [another country]. He was working as a temporary accountant through agencies just on an hourly basis, which was to, “raise money to convert my pilot’s license to the country’s pilot’s license, because each country has their own regimes, you can’t just covert it like a driver’s license.”

So he worked for a number of different places over there, but he had a problem with his pilot medical which meant that he had delayed working to fly over there, converting his pilot’s license by a year, and at that point he found that, “People sitting next to me doing similar jobs, but through IT agencies were earning about 25% more, and so had a think about that. I’ve always been somebody who has dabbled with computers. As a teenager, I had always written computer software, games and stuff.” So he thought he could do it, bought a book on Visual Basic, and reinvented himself as a software developer. Then he rehung his CV, talked to a few IT recruitment agencies, and got his first IT software development job and then progressively sort of worked all the way up chain of software, so by the time he had left the company, he was a Partner along with two other people. They were employing up to 30-40 people, doing insurance and banking software. He decided to leave because the business environment was no longer conducive and also he wanted to come back to New Zealand for the sake of his children.
When he came back to New Zealand, “I was in IT then, worked for a telephone Software Company, and I wasn’t enjoying it, so I thought what could I do now? I could go back to flying, but really now I’ve got young children and the lifestyle didn’t suit for flying”. So he enrolled in a New Zealand university and while he was working for a software company did his masters in taxation. The thinking was, “I figured that I needed to give myself an injection of credibility; I didn’t want to start at the bottom. So thought by doing masters, I will arm myself with knowledge, and then that combined with my commercial expertise hopefully, and someone will give me a break.”

He recalled getting support from his lecturers, “One of my lecturers very kindly gave me personal introductions to big accounting firms. So I had interviews with three of them, which meant that the job ultimately I got with X [previous firm] I didn’t start as a graduate, I started as a senior consultant on the cusp of a manager, so saved me about four years.” Then he decided to leave as one of the partners he worked for predominantly in that firm left, so he followed her about three months later. He shared that, “She is my mentor in Accounting as well as tax, so it’s probably one of the people who is most responsible for why I’m sitting around now. She identified there was an opportunity in Y [City], and sent me down here. I came here on a promise of partnership, but had to prove myself. I came down here three and half years ago, and was made a Partner two years ago.”

Daniel shares excellent relationships with his clients. “It’s a collaborative process, and that builds strong bonds, because you’re seen as that safe pair of hands with, somebody feels comfortable to pick up phone and say I need to have a chat about something.” He further shared how he adopts a very transparent approach to fees, which he has learnt from his mentor. “I basically give them a list of, this is the time we’ve done, these are the jobs, what the standard costs would be, this last column here, you complete, if you’re not comfortable with the number put whatever number you want in there.” He clearly has benefitted from this open approach, “My recovery is much higher than everyone else’s.”

Daniel has also worked consciously on his personal relationships after his separation from his wife. He recalled, “I was probably more the traditional, misogynistic, very much it fell on the traditional lines, that my career came first, and in terms of responsibility… cooking, cleaning, and stuff like that my wife would do that.”

But after the separation he has his children with him on a “one-week-on, one-week-off” basis. “Well, I have joint custody of the kids, so basically… so this week is not my week so I can work longer, and when I do have the kids, that means I have to get up, get them up, get them breakfast, make their lunches... deal with moody teenagers in the morning, and get back in home for dinner.” He has reframed his views and as a result adjusted very well to the new responsibility of looking after his children, “I am really enjoying the responsibility, the satisfaction of having all the laundry done, doing
things like shopping, feeding the dogs, all those things… there’s a satisfaction in it.” As a result, he is also experiencing the benefits, “Yes, it’s rewarding. My relationship with my children is much stronger than it has been in the past. It’s not all plain, it’s quite challenging.”

He is aware that he cannot plan his future now, but in five years’ time, “All my kids will finish school, so that doesn’t tie me to a city anymore. I’d quite like to go maybe go back to Southeast Asia or something and be a partner there, maybe one of the developing countries over there. I don’t know, that’s something which appeals to me. We have offices in 153 countries in the world, so…”

Daniel thinks that,

> Life is not a dress rehearsal and that if you’re not enjoying something, you should change it and not to take those decisions lightly, but too many people will tell you, ‘Oh, I hate my job, but I can’t afford to leave’. You can always afford.

This attitude has helped him invent a new pathway on the basis of his capabilities. He is extremely adaptable, “I am very much somebody who lives here, now. If I move then that becomes the now.” Thus, it can be identified from the above story that with his individual qualities, and his high cognitive, task and relational crafting practices, Daniel has successfully handled the various challenging situations in his life by adapting or inventing a new pathway. Evidently, he was rated at a high level of career crafting and personal success. Similarly three other participants faced challenging circumstances, and achieved personal success with career crafting.

4. **Low-medium family support, medium organisational support, unfavourable environment, but different levels of crafting lead to different career outcomes**

About eight participants belonged to this category. For example, Sue and Carol share a similar background. Initially they both had non-favourable environment which meant they could not pursue their chosen career goal, they have family responsibilities, a full-time working husband but had grandparental support, they both took a career break for children, and reported medium organisational support. However, as the following discussion illustrates, their different crafting skills have led to different outcomes.

Sue is identified as a high level crafter, she started her career after her children were older. Initially environment played an adverse role in her early career development as, “Back in those days I was in this church, almost treated getting higher education as though it’d be the worst thing you could choose to do. And so there was a very big pressure from that church that I was in, that you didn’t go to the university.” So she got married and had kids, but later she decided to pursue higher education when her children were older, “I was a bit bored when I was at home with the kids. I just came to
university because I was interested in the subject [accounting] and just to prove something to myself, and then of course teaching was in my blood.”

Sue recalled her experience of going back to university to pursue her accounting degree when her children were young – “It took me five years to get my bachelor’s part time. It was like they [the children] almost lived here, and we used to sometimes have meals in the cafeteria, and I’d go off to a tutorial, and they would play around, talk to the café ladies, and I’d come back again.” She got a lecturing opportunity through the tutor route, and later completed a PhD to affirm her academic position. The external organisation played a role, “The institute of Chartered Accountants gave me a PhD scholarship for a year.”

Then later when she started her career, she formulated a way of working when her children were younger – “So I’d come back after they were all in bed at nine at night, and did a couple of hours... worked then. I have never been that traditional, I have never ever worked at nine to five job in my 45 plus years working here.” This was also enabled by organisational policies, “As long as you are there for your lectures and you are there for a couple of office hours a week, didn’t matter when you did your work.” It has certainly helped her that she is well prepared, “I decide what needs to be done, and when it needs to be done by, and gets in my calendar and I just do it, I like to be organised well before.”

She also acknowledged spousal support, “I probably couldn’t have done it without my husband”. She talked about how she has actively garnered this spousal support, “He is learning; I am getting him trained. Every now and then he reverts back to the traditional roles, but I’ve got him fairly well trained.” She has a big family which means greater responsibilities, but as stated before, she has made an arrangement which has freed her time up, “I don’t do all the cooking, I only cook once a week, and everyone’s got chores.” She also appreciated grand-parental support, “My parents were very good when I was a student, and in the early days of teaching they would come and look after the kids if I had an early lecture, or my dad would pick up the kids from school.” Sue feels highly satisfied with her career, “I think academia is... everyone complains about their jobs, but I’m very happy, I think it’s very flexible.” As a result of her high cognitive, relational and task crafting practices, Sue has managed the external factors well, and reported high satisfaction.

Carol was rated at a lower level of career crafting. She reported that her initial career goal was to be in the police force, but it was opposed by the family, so she decided to pursue accounting as it was more popular to do commerce, “I kind of stumbled into it rather than thinking it through and thinking this is actually what I want to do for the rest of my life. It was more that I just went with the flow.” Her all girls’ school had a fairly narrow subject choice, embroidery and cooking and things like that, and accounting was not offered as a subject. Her perception of accountants was not very
positive, “Very much, men in suits I suppose, quite stuffy, probably a wee bit boring, not that exciting.” So it seems that the career decision was a rather reluctant, forced choice. She completed the professional qualification and worked as an Accountant for a few years, then re-joined the firm after taking a break for her children.

Currently at this stage, having grown up, independent children, Carol wants to make a change, as she is not happy in the current job, “It would be nice if I had less stress in my life, work wise.” But she does not know how to, “So I just want something different, sort of reinvigorating, and refreshing. But I haven’t quite figured out that one yet.” She feels that it is difficult not having a mentor, “Early on there were no people that I felt I could approach, whereas now I wish there was someone I could speak to more freely about what I want to do, where I want to end up”; but she has not made efforts to seek advice.

Carol reckons, “I wouldn’t like to be here, I would like to be not in an accounting firm, I would like to be in the corporate world I guess, or the University is a pretty good employer as well, but somewhere else, not in a CA firm”. When she communicated this to the boss, he said, ‘Tell me what you want to do, what you don’t want to do, we will make it work’. But this was not pursued by her, “I haven’t actually done that yet...” She admits, “I feel I have taken a very conservative, safe approach to life.” Thus, it can be observed that Carol has not really practised cognitive, task and relational crafting, which has led to a lower level of personal success.

Thus, the above illustrations highlighted the role played by individual career crafting practices and also acknowledged the role of family and organisation along with environmental factors. High career crafters were able to manage the external factors with their crafting skills, and reported high level of satisfaction, whereas lower level crafters could not conceptualise career goals, were unable to do the required activities and manage relationships which resulted in lower level of personal success.

5.7. Respondent and peer validation

As proposed in section 3.3, respondent validation was used to confirm the findings. This was achieved by individual presentation of the results to three participants. The key points of the career crafting approach were discussed. The participants corroborated the findings and could relate to the exploration of their career pathways with career crafting approach. When the above four case studies were presented to them, they identified their category resonating the researcher’s views. It was a form of validation to know that the paradigm was effectively understood by the participants, and it was acceptable as a career development explanatory mechanism to them.

The findings were also presented in career research symposiums in 2014 (Sukhapure, 2014) and 2015 (Sukhapure, 2015). They were attended by career development professionals, and the presentations...
were well received. The audience was interested in the model (though it was not fully developed then), and their valuable comments have added to the concept. A paper linking career crafting and career clarity was presented at the Labour, Work and Employment conference (Sukhapure & Cohen, 2015). The paper was published as a part of the refereed proceedings.

5.8. Conclusion

The discussion in this chapter has established the agentic role played by individuals through their career crafting practices in achieving desired outcomes. Career crafting triad established the close association between the three crafting practices – cognitive, task and relational crafting. It elaborated on how these factors are interlinked and are interdependent; they have to act together cohesively in order to attain the desired effect of career crafting.

A common theme throughout these findings is that career pathways are not only dependent on age, gender, position, marital and parental status, education, and environment. They also depend on how people see themselves – their self-concept – and how motivated they are to make a change to achieve desired outcomes. Career crafting is a tool that individuals can adopt to suit their own circumstances. This enhanced way of seeing a career provides a guided and systematic framework for integrating work with other dimensions of life; a framework that captures what individuals consider significant for themselves, thereby, motivating active, engaged, planned change.

Undoubtedly, micro (individual and family), meso (organisational) and macro (environmental) factors play significant roles, but as the various respondents revealed, the individual’s response and actions also matter in achieving desired outcomes. Career crafting is thus understood as a collaborative process between an individual and external factors.

It was identified that career crafting played an important role in achieving personal success which is determined by satisfaction in personal and professional spheres. It was also recognised that the desired outcomes varied for different individuals. Finally, career crafting paradigm illustrated the association between crafting skills, external factors and personal success. The external factors are important and persisting, but as observed from the case studies presented above, personal success is also determined by the cognitive, relational and task crafting abilities of individuals to create a desired future.

It is important to understand that though a powerful tool, individuals need some innate and acquired qualities that enable them to develop possible selves and build capabilities to achieve those life positions. On the basis of the career crafting incidences, the characteristics of the crafters were identified, which are presented in the next chapter along with the summary of the research findings highlighting the contribution to the field.
Chapter 6
Career Crafting Paradigm

6.1. Introduction

This thesis began with a statement of four main research objectives:

- To expand the concept of job crafting to “career crafting”;
- To test the extended concept by developing career crafting framework to understand how individuals (in this case, accounting professionals in New Zealand) use it in their career progression;
- To investigate the effect of gender on the various aspects of career development and career crafting; and
- To gain insights on the impact of “career crafting” on personal success.

In order to achieve these objectives, Chapter 2 laid the theoretical foundation for the thesis focusing on different perspectives on career development, formation of career pathways with regard to gender, and commented on the paradigm shift in the perception of personal success. The research methodology was presented in Chapter 3 with qualitative research as the chosen approach to study the concept of career crafting with the discussion of data collection and proposed method for analysis. Chapter 4 analysed career pathways of the participants exploring career routes and career focus with regard to gender. The external factors of family, organisation and environment were discussed. Chapter 5 elaborated on the career crafting approach by presenting career crafting triad that demonstrated the cohesive relationship between the three components – cognitive, relational and task crafting. It also presented career crafting paradigm by synthesising the different elements. The impact of various crafting strategies and other factors on careers was explored and illustrated with numerous examples and case studies.

This chapter summarises the main findings of this research. It begins with the discussion of summary of six research questions that were set out in section 1.5. It then highlights the contribution to the field in section 6.3. The story of Helen Lowe introduced in Chapter 1, is used in section 6.4 to demonstrate the broader scope of the research approach and ground the phenomenon in the history of studying the self and its relationship to careers. Next, comments on the limitations of the project are presented followed by an outline of the scope for further research. The chapter finishes with the conclusion.
6.2. Conclusion to research questions

The research objectives led to the formulation of six research questions aimed at investigating the twin phenomena of career crafting and career development. These questions are presented below. Each is followed by a discussion of how the data addressed the issues these represented with reference to the original research objectives.

1. How do individuals, in this case, accounting professionals, pave career pathways?

A number of participants in this study have moved through different stages during their careers, forming a lattice-like pattern (see Appendix K). The textual analysis confirmed that career decisions are multi-faceted, comprehensive and complicated. It was evident that career development involves deliberate, calculative, yet intuitive efforts that balances functionality and creativity. As the participants frequently commented, a career is an evolving piece of work; a matrix of personal and professional factors intermeshing with other external factors.

Career development is a process that unfolds with the passage of time. It was identified that this process was accelerated for high career crafters as they were clear about their pathway from an early stage and worked constructively toward achieving their goals. In case of other participants, the hazy path became clearer as they developed their career crafting skills along the way (See section 5.4). These also reflected the reciprocal influence of both contextual and individual factors. It was particularly interesting that none of the participants sought professional advice from an external career agency for career development.

Some participants attributed the change in their pathway to unexpected turns and twists in their lives. Initially, the researcher attributed this to serendipity. Closer examination revealed, however, that it was not pure chance; as one of the high career crafters (Sam) stated, “Nothing is a fluke really...” There were strongly influential elements of cognitive, relational and task crafting contributions revealed through the participants’ comments. For example, some noted that one creates their own luck by being prepared to think differently and act differently, and by being accessible, being in the right place at the right time. Successful career crafting relies on having the skills and the drive to take luck and push it forward. Thus, serendipity does not necessarily mean not having control over the effects of chance events; rather participants’ explanations suggested that career crafting practices played an instrumental role in transforming these unexpected events into career opportunities (section 5.3.1).

The two participant groups exhibited a variety of patterns in forming their career pathways. These were summarised as:
Career pathway as an accounting academic

None of the 15 participants pursued academia as an initial career goal, all were exposed to it either through tutoring or lecturing, and then they decided to become academics. Therefore, they were labelled as “incidental” academics. Two main pathways were identified from the data, “Student-tutor-to-academic” and “CA-to-academic”.

Ten participants were CAs and shifted to academia for better work-life balance and/or to satisfy their personal career goals. A high degree of transferability from firms to academia facilitated this shift. None of the five ACA (Associate CA) participants considered a shift; possibly because they assumed a low probability of transferring from academia to firms. As Keith commented, “But a company wouldn’t take an academic, it would be unusual...”

Career pathway as an accounting practitioner

Unlike their academic counterparts, accounting practitioners chose their career intentionally. Eleven of the 21 participants had the clear goal of joining an accounting practice as their primary career path. For ten others also it was a deliberate decision to become an accounting professional, though at a later stage in their lives after a series of positions. They were doing accounting related jobs, and saw CA as a prospective profession. Hence, they went to university with that objective, invested time and energy, completed the degree course and professional requirements, and then joined an accounting firm.

2. How are initial career goals connected to career position and future career goals?

Initial career

The decision about the first job sets in motion the career trajectory. The textual analysis revealed that career crafting practices, along with family of orientation, school and general environment played a major role in shaping their initial career pathways. Fourteen participants had a clear career goal and worked towards it from the outset of their initial career path, whereas 22 participants had unclear goals – nine went to university and developed a goal while pursuing a degree; and the remaining 13 participants (four male and nine female) left high school, and started work, or family (in case of some female participants).

Subsequent career

Career development was found to be a process that included periods of stability and exploration, which corresponded to life stages. For subsequent pathways, decisions were largely dependent on the career satisfaction levels, personal characteristics, and family and work situation. One-third of the participants continued on the same pathway (n = 12), largely because they were happy with the way their personal and professional goals were fulfilled.
Navigational change
A number of participants (n = 24) sought new career pathways. These redirections resulted from dissatisfaction with their personal and/or professional lives; participants wanted to change the course of their careers to achieve a higher degree of fulfilment. They mainly used the invention strategy and explored a new pathway by relocating, changing the sector or organisation they worked for, or going back to university as a mature student to equip themselves with the knowledge and qualifications necessary to design a new career pathway.

Future career
At the time of the interviews, almost all participants had a clear vision of where they wanted to go. It is notable that not all wanted to reach the top position in their organisation. Some wanted to grow laterally, seeking work-life balance, having more of “me time” to pursue personal interests. Some wanted to remain in the same position, as they were aware that navigational change was not feasible at this stage. Having invested considerable time and effort over the years they have adapted to accommodate the changes. James pondered, “It’s too big a decision to change your mind, so there is a certain degree of ‘You’ve made your bed, now lie in it’.”

It is notable that none of the accounting practitioners want to start their own practice, which could be a progressive goal. They feel very well supported by their current firms and are happy to enjoy the variety of work and wide exposure at the international level.

Thus, future goals involved elements particular to both personal and professional lives. Several individuals commented on this aspect of the career crafting approach. Examples of these included rekindling the passion for flying (Daniel), focusing on family after a separation (Martin), excelling with a new mentoring role at work and training new staff (Amanda), continuing in the same professional role yet spending more time with teenage children (Yvonne), or working constructively towards getting promoted (Virginia), and so on.

3. What is the role of the individual and the external factors in framing career pathways, and in the choices they make?

It was clear that career goals and resultant pathways were influenced by personal characteristics, family background, workplace, and environmental factors. But most importantly, career crafting emerged as a collaborative process where the effect of crafting depended as much on the individual’s efforts as on the responses of others in personal and professional contexts; these four factors are presented below.
**Individual**

The textual analysis of participants’ accounts revealed all sorts of patterns in their profiles. Some had difficult early years, experienced various forms of hardship, others had an easier childhood. Some had school support, others were not directed. There were some who knew early on in life what career they would pursue, while others changed their direction as they matured. It was clear that events or effects of early life alone do not always shape the career pathways. Rather over time, it depended on how people responded to changed circumstances; this is an important aspect of career crafting practice. It was identified that with career crafting individuals developed possible selves – educational; professional (colleague, superior, subordinate, academic/consultant); personal (parental, spousal, friend, social) – for better outcomes.

Career crafters have good cognitive, relational and task crafting skills which are mainly determined by the following characteristics. These were derived from the crafting behaviour of the participants. The list does not indicate that career crafters possess all characteristics, but the participants who were rated at high level, exhibited most of these.

- Proactive, energetic, persistent, assertive, passionate about their work and life
- Self-efficacy, vision of another way of living, confident expectation, and accordingly conceiving and developing possible selves
- Working hard toward achieving the goals and experimenting with a number of alternative solutions until they are certain they have found one that will work best
- Social skills/people skills- understanding other party’s needs
- Taking charge, well-utilise the unexpected turns on the career pathway, make navigational change if necessary.
- Seek advice of experts and mentors, equip themselves with the necessary skills
- Time management, awareness of work and home demands and find solutions to fulfil them adequately
- Community work: giving it back to the society
- Understand tangible and intangible costs/benefits of personal and professional decisions
- Adapt to changed situation or invent a new pathway, ability to respond to and manage changes in the external factors
- Understand what leads to satisfaction, take steps to remove dissatisfaction, understand it’s a juggle and constantly work at it
**Family**

Two types of families played a role in career development. These were related to the stage in the family life cycle and shifts as one matured. The family of orientation was pre-eminent in the initial career, whilst the family of procreation supplanted this later in the career crafting process.

**Family of orientation**

Parental encouragement in the pursuit of knowledge, introducing children to career opportunities, and family contextual factors affected initial career development. From the analysis, it was clear that the family of orientation’s support included both general and specific support – general support in terms of offering emotional and financial resources, encouragement and backing for the career choice; specific support was constructively guiding, creating and providing learning experiences facilitating specific career goals. Thus, family of orientation played a major role in initial career development. However, only four participants were classified as having both high general and high specific family support; all four had high career clarity and reported high levels of personal success.

**Family of procreation**

In the case of married participants with children, spousal support was identified as the key factor – partner’s work and lifestyle choices – being the most important source of support. Career focus depended to a great extent on family-work arrangements. As Philip said, “It is equal sharing of the commitments, particularly around family” that mattered most.

However, it was also notable that women participants with stay-at-home partners do not benefit the same way as their male counterparts, nor to the same extent (see Table 4-9). They were not completely freed from family responsibilities despite the work status of their partner. The main reason for this was found to be the gender stereotypes men and women have with regard to household responsibilities.

**Organisation**

Schools played a key role in shaping initial career preferences of the participants. Workplace was clearly a main factor in the later career development; as illustrated below.

**School**

Along with family of origin, schools played a pivotal role in terms of influencing the initial career goal. However, some participants seemed disappointed with the school’s degree of support for them in making initial career choices. For those who did receive support, it was mainly in one or more of four ways:
• Curriculum choice – participants whose initial career goal was accounting thought this was mainly because they had studied it in school and had developed greater interest in the subject through their experience. However, in some schools accounting was not available (to meritorious participants), because subjects were streamed and accounting was situated towards the bottom of the choices available. This was likely to send signals that accounting is not a worthwhile career for academically bright people. For women participants who went to all girls’ schools, accounting was not likely to even be offered in their curriculum, sending the signal that it is exclusively a male occupation.

• Teachers – teachers can play a great role in creating interest in academic subjects. However, only a few participants attributed their career choice to their accounting teacher.

• Career advice – again only a few participants talked about getting good career advice from their schools. In particular, most female participants complained that their school did not point them in the accounting direction.

• Liaison – a few participants talked about the role played by school in facilitating links with firms looking to recruit students, a relationship which facilitated a career pathway for them.

Workplace

Workplace can affect career pathways either by facilitating professional development or by restraining it. It was quite evident from responses that the accounting practitioners had far more instances where they talked positively about their firms, as compared to the academics who provided substantially fewer instances of positive comments. In particular, it was identified that organisations played a key role with respect to the following factors – organisational support and opportunities, training, freedom to design job, flexibility, social events, superiors, work associates, and mentoring.

The participants were diverse in terms of their backgrounds, personal circumstances, expectations, and aspirations. Organisations need to understand this variety and think about what employees find attractive about their work, and how job demands and the individual may be actively and deliberately aligned. For example, ten participants shifted to academia citing high pressure of jobs in firms, in particular the “clock-in-clock-out” nature of the job. However, it seems that this is not a feature of the accounting sector, rather it depends on the policies of an organisation and the expectations of individuals, as none of the accounting practitioners complained about this. In fact, many noted that they appreciated the freedom and flexibility their firms offered them.
Some of the navigational changers (n = 24) left their previous organisations because their employer could not offer them enough stimulating change nor the flexibility to incorporate their personal goals into their work. It makes economic sense to retain and nurture employee talent in order to generate best returns from all corporate resources. As one of the participants stated, “It’s expensive to lose staff, and costs a huge amount of money in hiring the staff.”

Moreover, employees of the new generation are more likely than their predecessors to be dual-centric, that is, to give as much importance to work as they do to the family as was amply demonstrated by the choices made by this study’s participants. Organisations and individuals both suffer if there is poor employee well-being. Therefore, organisations need to offer avenues for professional as well as personal fulfilment, or employees may leave seeking it for themselves.

Environment
Environment plays a vital role in career development, but considering that many events happen outside an individual’s control, career crafting is based on how one responds to the situations encountered. There are numerous factors in the external environment. These were discussed in previous chapters; the following two were identified as the most influential.

From a career’s point of view, the socio-cultural environment was found to play an important role in terms of shaping beliefs and instilling norms that led to forming career aspirations. This occurred in two ways, and applied particularly to the older participants (the 40 above age group). Firstly, the accounting sector was not always highly respected in previous generations. This is illustrated by participants observing that it was almost looked down upon by other professionals, and therefore was not a desirable career option for some. Secondly, from the point of view of the female participants, it seems we have come a long way in terms of career and social norms. Several of the older female participants talked about past societal expectations, one saying that, “At that time in the 70s when I got married, everyone was going to... stay at home and have children”. This was in contrast to the view of a younger participant, who could confidently state that, “At the moment, I am focussed on my career, so I have no plans for having children in the near future.”

Another influential factor is political-legal environment as government policies played an important role in facilitating career pathways. For example, some participants appreciated the support of student allowance which helped them to focus on the studies while they were at the university. Additionally, the Inland Revenue Department’s (IRD) policy of providing studentship to qualifying applicants also facilitated a career pathway for students from a young age, just after high school. IRD paid for full time work and gave time off to students to attend university. Three participants opted for this route, and acknowledged the role of IRD in their career development.
4. How is gender related to career development and career crafting?

This research confirms that gender differences exist in the accounting sector, and they are persistent. These variations are linked to broader differences in the external and organisational environment, the personal and family circumstances, and life goals. In particular, women’s attitudes and views towards the effect of employment on family needs, and the spousal support they received, affected their career decisions. While it is clear that biological factors of child-bearing make an impact on women’s career, and that families take up a lot of space in women’s life; there are also deeper socio-cultural and institutional beliefs that act as limiting factors for career progression of women.

Agreeing with these constraints, in this research it was found that it essentially depended on the attitudes and individual characteristics of the participants. The career development of men and women participants was found to be distinctive with the following characteristics.

Career break

Of the 15 married female participants with children, 14 had taken a career break, off-ramping or opting out for a period of time (Table 4-7). Some of them re-started their career after the children were older. In contrast, the majority of the male participants did not take a career break; the three male participants who did so chose to invest that time in further education.

Career patterns

It was observed that career patterns of men and women differ. Family responsibilities and who fulfils them play a key role in determining these patterns. It has been noted in the literature that for men the priorities are – education, work, and then family. For women the sequence was different – education, family, and then work. This research has identified that in fact these patterns cover a broader spectrum of life-work orientations as presented below. Note the integrated “work & family” stage for both participants, acknowledging the important role of the family in career decisions for both men and women.

Male and female participants:
- Education, work & family
- Education, work, education, work & family

Two additional patterns were revealed for female participants:
- Education, family, education, work & family
- Education, work, family, work & family
**Career decisions**

Confirming the findings in the literature, it was observed that family played a key role in women’s career decisions. For example, with regard to the academic group, eight male participants mainly chose academia for fulfilling their personal interests in teaching and research, career opportunities, autonomy, and flexibility. Whereas, all seven female participants chose academia because of their personal interest in the subject, but more tellingly from a career crafting point of view, also because the academic context is more family-friendly. The greater flexibility enhanced their ability to fulfil family responsibilities.

Thus, though there were distinctive differences in the career development process of men and women, the phenomenon of career crafting was not found to be entirely related to gender (see Appendix L). It was found to be more related to personal characteristics which are discussed above in Research Question 4 (Individual). The other important findings about gender are further presented in section 6.3.2.

5. **How do the main elements of career crafting – task, relational and cognitive – lead to effective crafting?**

Participants’ career development was found to be a unique process that differed from individual to individual depending on his/her life stage, needs, and the decisions and actions taken from the point of entry into the workforce to the later career stages. The analysis demonstrated that it could be attributed to specific career crafting elements. Career crafting played an instrumental role in career development for participants who practised it at a higher level (see section 5.3 for detailed explanation).

The three components of career crafting – cognitive, relational and task – were found to be interlinked and interdependent. Each of these three influences are brought to bear on the decisions and activities that can alter an individual’s pathway. These connections were presented in the form of a triad in the previous chapter with the idea that the three elements have to work together in harmony to have a cohesive effect of career crafting. The association between the three crafting elements (CC, RC & TC) determines the strength of the triad which is the extent of career crafting.

It was observed that a high level of each of these three crafting practices resulted in high career crafting. When they were high together, the motivation to change and the activities necessary were more likely to result in a career fulfilment. In contrast, a low level of the three practices meant little was done for a career change and the path remained the same despite dissatisfaction. In the case of mixed level of the practices (high and low combination), there was a variable degree of change. Even if one aspect was low, it weakened the whole triad, meaning it did not lead to high career crafting.
Figure 5.1 is reproduced here along with the description of the crafting components. These are further discussed in section 6.3.1.

**Figure 6-1 Career crafting triad (reproduced from Figure 5.1)**

6. **What is the association between career crafting and personal success?**

Participants confirmed that there has been a paradigm shift in determining career success. Objective success that is mainly measured in terms of the position and salary is important to some, but something more individually rewarding in terms of personal preferences is gaining importance. It was confirmed from the participants’ accounts that achieving personal success depends on individuals’ own evaluations of their lives.

It was stated earlier that the key to finding satisfaction in life is not just finding the right job; it is also about becoming the right worker, friend, or life partner (Jarvis, 2003), and as identified in this research, it is also becoming the right parent, as caring for children was found to be a major factor in determining career pathways. For example, initially Mandy delayed having children focusing on her career; promotion and progression were important then; but once she has had children, she has not taken up a bigger role at her firm as she finds spending time with her children highly fulfilling.

Thus, personal success depends on the awareness of what one wants in life, to select and nurture relationships with people who matter, to be aware that it is a constant process of working and reworking, and performing the tasks to achieve desired outcomes. Thereby, personal success for any
one person is having the "right" combination of satisfaction in personal and professional spheres of their life. This perception was found to be related to how they conceptualised career goals and defined their “personal” success by either separating or integrating both spheres.

**Professional sphere**

It was identified from participants’ accounts that securing a desired position, meaningful job, higher level/title, higher salary, higher research ratings (for academic participants), autonomy and independence, time flexibility, challenging and dynamic work, building a good team, and career progression contributed to satisfaction in the professional sphere.

**Personal sphere**

Participants noted the following as the success markers in the personal sphere: good health, spending time with children, fulfilling family responsibilities, gardening, local community, spending time with friends, watching favourite TV programmes, financial stability, pursuing hobbies, and personal interest like doing a course (not for professional development but to satisfy self-interest) and so on.

The above discussion has outlined how the research questions were addressed. The expected outcome of any research endeavour is to contribute to a scientific body of knowledge that can be useful empirically. The following section elaborates on the key contribution of this research.

### 6.3. Contribution to the field

The theoretical basis of this thesis has been the expansion of job crafting to career crafting, tested by examining the career pathways of 36 accounting professionals. A literature review and analysis of participants’ inputs have enriched and enhanced the career crafting approach; there were also some significant findings with regard to gender. These are presented in sections 6.3.1 and 6.3.2 below.

#### 6.3.1 Career crafting paradigm

While confirming some of the findings of job crafting, a new approach to career development was developed to encompass broader factors and capture the paradigm shift in perceptions of personal success. Career crafting depends on the agentic capabilities of a person, but it was identified that one cannot ignore the surrounding external factors of family, organisation and environment. It was established that with career crafting one can mitigate adverse effects of these external factors and create new opportunities. This concept of career crafting was elaborated and validated through the several instances discussed in Chapters 4 and 5. Figure 6.2 reproduces Figure 5.4 which had presented the career crafting paradigm.
To reiterate, an individual is surrounded by the external factors of family, organisation and environment; these three are interlinked and they affect each other in different ways. There is a mutual, reciprocal relationship between an individual and the outer world. The extent of career crafting manages these factors to a certain extent, and the career crafting effort is also partly determined by these factors leading to personal success. The three main pillars of career crafting approach are discussed below.

**Career crafting components**

a. Cognitive Crafting (CC)

Cognitive crafting was found to be associated with the conscious mental processes of perception, judgment and reasoning that involve thinking, understanding, learning, and remembering. Becoming aware of the self is a process, and it was found that participants who practised cognitive crafting developed their understanding, at times by making mistakes but learning from them, or adapting to changed circumstances. Cognitive crafting is also about knowing what you don’t want to do. A good understanding of the self and setting priorities accordingly, helped the participants in conceptualising a suitable career goal.
Cognitive crafting is also about reconsidering goals if the previous ones prove unsatisfactory over a period of time as a result of a change in circumstances. It was found that the closer their perception was to reality, the more likely they were to feel satisfied with the experience. If there was a dissonance between perception and the reality, individuals needed to change their former views about their careers to gain more satisfaction out of their choices.

b. Relational Crafting (RC)
The concept primarily refers to how individuals managed relationships with others in their personal and professional life. Personal relationships, mainly family, featured prominently in the discussion. Professional relationships appeared at two levels – internal and external. Participants talked about importance of maintaining good relationships internally with superiors, work associates and subordinates in the organisation. With regard to the external work relationships, accounting practitioners observed that relationships with their clients are vital; and for academics, it was important to network with researchers from other universities.

Relational crafting does not only mean one has to get on well with everyone. It is also about selecting the nature, number and level of relationships in one’s personal and professional spheres. Maintaining relationships is a dynamic and a two-way process, which changes with the people involved and the circumstances of the relationships.

c. Task Crafting (TC)
The major resource that needs to be managed in task crafting is time. This is obviously a fixed resource, available to everybody in the same measure. It is about managing personal and professional activities in the available time frame to achieve personal success. Task crafting means performing important and relevant tasks, and also giving some up now for better outcomes later.

Participants discussed three types of professional activities – routine, developmental and social. All three were found to be important for achieving professional goals – the routine activities were essential for maintaining performance, developmental activities were extra steps taken by the individuals for furthering their progress, and social activities helped in forming good working relationships which are an integral part of working effectively in organisations. Some of the participants experienced that being involved in activities outside the workplace has expanded their horizons as well as providing them with other benefits. Personal activities mainly centred on spending time with family, particularly for married participants with children.

As stated earlier, career crafting is a result of the cohesive relationship between the above three components. It was also confirmed that career crafting is based on four key ideas; these are presented below.
**Agentic role of individuals, but a collaborative process in development of possible selves**

Job Crafting was presented as an individual-level activity wherein employees were presumed to be proactive architects of their jobs. Career crafting approach also focuses on what individuals can achieve through the above mentioned three main components of crafting. However, this research confirmed that individual agency was influenced by the external factors of family, organisation and environment.

It was identified that career crafting enables people to develop their possible selves and build their capabilities to achieve desired outcomes in the given circumstances. These are basically an individual’s ideas of what they would like to become. But it is understood that creation of a future is not entirely in their hands, as the various roles they play in the personal and professional capacity are also partially determined by the surrounding factors of family, organisation and environment. It was recognised as a reciprocal relationship where the effect of crafting depended as much on individual efforts as on the responses of others to those efforts.

Career crafting is understood to be a joint process where organisations can also play an important role. For example, management can become involved in facilitating crafting activities by assessing and identifying employees’ strengths and needs. Managers can create the conditions that foster the alignment of employee’s career crafting with organisational goals.

**Bi-directional effect on work and life**

Job crafting focussed on how individuals make changes to their jobs and how it affects them at workplace. Career crafting extended this to include the personal and professional life spheres as though they are different; they are interconnected. In particular, it was confirmed that performance or experience in one sphere influenced roles in the other. For example, Sally shared how her professional experience helped her in the personal life, “I have been able to help them [her children] quite a bit with their homework, and stuff, because I know a few things and I know the ropes. I think they appreciate that they have had that… from my work, and that helped with getting them started at university.” James explained how doing community work helped, “That’s two fold, because personally you grow, you have a lot of learning experiences, you get involved in a whole lot of things outside of work, which you then develop, you use some of those skills, but also develop others, and then you bring back into the work place.” Thus, it was recognised that career crafting has a bi-directional effect on both spheres, that of work and life.

**Structured/scaffolding process of building capabilities**

There are two ways of building capabilities. On one hand, career crafting is a set of purposeful and deliberate activities where the participants experienced benefits over a long period of time. It was identified that those who practised high cognitive, task and relational crafting, achieved personal
success earlier. For example, Cheryl deliberately undertook activities that put her firmly on the accounting track from an early age, and achieved her personal and professional goals.

On the other hand, there were many others who lacked this clarity from the beginning, but they developed their crafting skills along the way and gradually built their way up. Scaffolding in this case conveys that it may not always be a well-planned activity, but crafting provides the necessary support as the building grows. For example, initially Roger was not sure about his career, but over a period of time he gradually conceptualised ideal goals, performed necessary tasks to achieve it, and managed meaningful relationships; he reported high level of personal success though relatively at a later stage in the life.

**Adaptation/invention strategy**

The central concept of career crafting is based on the idea that careers can be developed in an intentional manner if individuals make it a conscious process. Since a lot of career related factors are out of control of the individuals, at times they have to proactively make these changes, or if the change has already taken place in the environment, then they have to suitably respond to and act on the changes. They need to be open-minded, willing to take risks to change a situation by inventing a new pathway, or sometimes change their thinking to adapt to the situation, thus primarily focusing on what one can control to a certain extent.

### 6.3.2 Gender and career

As stated earlier, at the time of this research no job crafting study was found that had explored the implications of gender. Career crafting considered this aspect as one cannot overlook gender while studying careers. And certainly, gender was identified as one of the most important issues in this research; there were significant differences in the way men and women developed their careers. This was extensively discussed in the previous chapters. The salient points are noted below:

**Career focus**

Men and women in the sample exhibited varying levels of career focus (see Table 4.8). None of the male or female participants had a singular focus on career. All recognised an element of family considerations in their career decisions. Even those who were not married considered their ageing parents when making career decisions, documenting the expansive role family plays in career decisions.

The element of career focus was expressed in one of two ways, either as an adaptive focus on career and family, or a substantially greater focus on career. Four male participants had an adaptive focus. Of these four, only one willingly opted to look after their young daughter as his wife works full time and he has a more flexible job; three others now accommodate their responsibilities to their children...
because of separation/divorce, and they have had to adapt. Fourteen of the male participants were able to more thoroughly focus on career as one was single, two did not have children and the remaining eleven with children had a supportive spouse.

In contrast, 14 female participants with an adaptive focus demonstrated that women are more likely to balance their interests between autonomy (individual) and homonymy (individual as a part of a larger group, in this case, family and workplace), and that this is an ongoing struggle for them. As Yvonne said, “You are sort of torn in two different ways.” The other four female participants could have greater focus on career; one is single, two are without children and one has a stay-at-home partner.

It was also found that women’s career focus could be attributed to the increasing independence and empowerment of women, and an enhanced ability at communicating their career aspirations to their partners; these were positive contributors in adding force to women’s voice and agency (see section 4.4.2).

The career focus was also positively associated with the egalitarian gender role attitudes of their partners. Almost all women participants with stay-at-home husbands admitted that this “role reversal” was possible because their partners were not career oriented people. As Sharon shared, “I am not sure that had he [her husband] been a big career person as well, I necessarily would have quite taken the same path.”

**Integral role of spousal support**

The career decisions were mainly determined by the level of spousal support with childcare and household work which emerged as pivotal with regard to career management. Particularly, this was found to be a major influencing factor for women who are primary bread-winners in this research because of the notable shift in fatherhood and spousal support.

**The other side of the glass ceiling**

The concept of glass ceiling was examined and has relevance to this study. It was recognised by female participants that glass ceiling exists in both academia and accounting firms. They expressed concern about having fewer women at the top. However, as argued earlier, the glass ceiling may exist partly because of the fact that women often take a break or begin their careers later in life. Anybody who does so is not likely to progress as well as those who do not.

Almost all married women in this study have taken time away from their work, thus sending an unintentional signal the career is of less importance. Moreover, most married women with children in this research have prioritised family, not wanting to climb the ladder while the children are young.
Thus, some of the female participants have opportunities to reach the top, but contrary to some prevailing opinions about glass ceiling and barriers to women reaching the top, they are quite happy to be at the same level, and choose to enjoy the work-life balance it provides them.

The relationship of motherhood is still strongly related to promotions and commitment. This was observed from the decisions of two younger female participants (age 30-39). Cheryl has decided not to have children now, understanding that it will impede her career progression; while Alice has decided to have children now but accepting that this means she will be in the same position for several years.

**Myth-busting**

The differences between men and women have been extensively studied and established. For example, men tend to construe success more in terms of self-development and personal accomplishments, and women more in terms of family. Women are more concerned than men with the welfare of other people and that interpersonal relationships are more important to women than to men. Literature also talks about “career first attitude” of men. Most male and female participants in this research identify with these patterns.

However, an important finding of this research is that this appears to be so because men have spouses who support them in terms of family responsibilities. When they lose that support, as three male participants in this group did because of separation/divorce, they had to shift their career focus to accommodate the new responsibilities. It was identified that these men have adapted what are commonly known as, “female career patterns”, where they are concerned about their children and fit their career to fulfil the responsibilities.

Another point to make is with regard to gender leisure gap. It was realised that while women did sacrifice their personal leisure time for their children, it was found that some male participants in this research also experienced that personal hobbies go on the back-burner while the children were young. Thus, women as well as men consider family while taking career decisions, and change their focus depending on their situation.

Research transferability is an important goal of any research to demonstrate that the proposed model can be applied in other settings. The findings are always local in the sense that the discoveries apply to the sample of the study, but the construct can be tested to a different case. Helen Lowe’s story was presented as an anecdote in Chapter 1 (section 1.6); it is presented below as a case study to validate the career crafting approach.
6.4. The story of Helen Lowe and Career Crafting

Helen Lowe was the first woman to qualify as an accountant in Scotland (1919). Her career history suggests that women can overcome the gender discrimination inherent in accounting firms (Jeacle, 2011), and here it is demonstrated that with the practice of career crafting, gender or any other perceived factor may take on an altogether different character beyond the confines of its domain, and desired outcomes can be achieved. Lowe’s career pathway, formulation of goals and personal success are examined through the lens of career crafting.

1. Initial career goal

Crafting characteristics: Self-awareness, faith in capabilities, developing possible selves.

Conceptualising career goal: To work and live in London.

Career crafting: At the age of 16 Lowe left her middle class home in Edinburgh to make a life of her own in London (1914), and worked as a clerk in accounting field in the Post Office.

Family: Well-off family, her parents were shocked about her decision to leave home, but supported her in the endeavour.

Personal success: Achieved her goal of working and living an independent life in London.

2. Subsequent goals

Change in situation: Lowe had to leave her position in the Post Office, probably similar to countless other female clerks of the era, she was encouraged to make way for the veterans of the Great War. There could have been a variety of responses to changed circumstances, for example, Lowe could have got married and become a home-maker; or joined another organisation to work as a clerk; or gone to university for further education; but she chose a professional accounting route.

Reconceptualising career goal: Pursue an accounting career

Crafting characteristics: Cognitive ability, confident expectation, self-efficacy, development of professional self, inventing a new pathway.

Cognitive crafting: Work experience as a clerk exposed her to the idea of pursuing an accounting career, she reframed her career goals, and decided to become a professional accountant.

Task crafting: Gain professional accounting qualifications

- Sat her final exams in 1919 with the London Association of Accountants (the only body then that admitted female members) and achieved ‘excellent marks’ to qualify as an accountant.
- Commenced employment with a CA firm.
External factors: Passing of Sex Discrimination (Removal) Bill in 1919 required the professional organisations to abandon their male only policy, so the Institute of Chartered Accountants, Scotland were obliged to admit women as members.

Personal success - Achieved her goal of becoming a qualified accountant at the age of 21, in fact she got a double qualification and she was one of the first women Chartered Accountants in Scotland.

3. Navigational change

Change in situation: A new partner (male) was promoted ahead of Lowe despite her double qualifications and nine years of practice with the firm, so she left the accounting firm.

Reconceptualising career goal: Setting up her own accountancy practice as a single woman.

Crafting characteristics: Faith in capabilities and chalking out a new pathway, well-utilised unexpected turns, equip with necessary skills, work hard to achieve goals, community work, driving power and ambition.

Cognitive crafting:
- Decided to run a ‘one woman show’ till she settled in the practice (she was her own assistant, typist and postage boy).
- Aware of the impending struggle as a single woman accounting practitioner.
- Aware of the need to promote her experience and expertise to prospective clients and contacts.
- Innovative strategy of acting as a mortgage and investment broker, insurance agent, and executor of estates.

Task & relational crafting:
- Leased centrally located premises next to the CA Institute for her venture.
- Honed her typewriting and business writing skills primarily by writing in a business style to her friends.
- Severely hampered by the advertising restrictions, Lowe overcame it by using an informal self-promotion strategy to acquaintances and friends of acquaintances.
- Secured agency with a building society by proactively applying for it.
- Secretary, treasurer, and auditor for clubs and associations.
- Membership of club for women in management and professions which introduced her to potential new female clients.
- Active supporter of local charities, women’s organisations, advocate of women’s causes, passionate about well-being of the community.
Social support: Lowe’s correspondence with her former school teacher, family, and friends shows that they supported and lauded her courageous adventure.

Family support: She never married, and lived in the family home with her unmarried sister who abandoned her teaching career, and acted as the housekeeper.

External factors: Women were important investors in the stock market from the late 19th century; Lowe’s female clients outnumbered her male clients by two to one.

Personal success:

- She turned gender, a perceived disadvantage both in gaining entry to the profession and in seeking promotion, into an opportunity by offering her services to female clients.
- Successfully ran her practice for 70 years, and expanded from a modest office of two rooms to ownership of the whole building and also the neighbouring one.
- Initial capital investment of £54 in 1928 ultimately yielded almost £7 million estate by 1998.
- She was highly regarded as an accountant and as an achiever in a man’s world.

Thus, it can be seen from the above discussion that career crafting has played a major role in Lowe’s career development. She was able to manage the external factors of family, organisation and environment with her crafting skills and achieved personal success.

6.5. Limitations of the study

A research study can be designed in numerous ways, but no design can be possibly complete and comprehensive. As stated before (section 3.3), research findings are always interpreted by examination of the evidence, and interpretation is never free from potential error. Therefore, as Bernard and Ryan (2010) argued, the real test would be to see how it stands up against a new set of cases that weren’t used in building the model. The career crafting approach was applied to the above case study of Helen Lowe, but several issues remain which merit further investigation.

According to Pawar (2009), a theory seeks to provide a simplified representation of a limited part of a reality, here the career crafting approach is based on study of the career development of accounting professionals in New Zealand. Whether this model or theory is transferable to other occupations needs to be ascertained – emphasising how (if at all) and in what ways understanding and knowledge of career crafting can be applied in other contexts and settings.

Though career crafting is an individualised and voluntary activity, it is embedded in the environment and thus is dependent on externalities. For example, while the study has found association between
crafting and career clarity, as Berg et al. (2010) noted in their study, it is possible that some of the crafting incidents may have been result of other factors not mentioned by the participants and it is likely that the process is more complicated than the model implies. The interactions with people involved in these events cannot by itself bring to understand the wider forces that shaped their lives.

The sample
Participants included professionals holding higher positions in the organisation. This might have led to an advantaged group in terms of income and position, and therefore has recorded high levels of satisfaction. Another issue is, though not intended to be, the sample was racially homogenous consisting of people of European descent. While this provided a common ground for comparison, other ethnic groups were not studied on this occasion.

Data collection
Semi-structured, in-depth interviewing was chosen for data collection as it was thought to be the most suitable method that fits the purpose of the research to explore the new approach of career crafting. However, this also posed certain limitations as listed below:

- The research is primarily based on the individual account, need to consider other objective evidence of crafting.
- The interview data was collected in one meeting, it gave a snapshot of the career pathway.
- Interviews can never unearth the “truth” as they do not reflect objective reality.
- Interviews with life partners could have been effective for better understanding of the ‘other’ side of the story.
- Interviews with organisational members would have provided different perspective to the data.

Textual analysis
Qualitative research relies largely on documentary materials and proper attention needs to be paid to the textual data as it is understood that documents are not neutral, transparent reflections of participants’ lives. Intertextuality refers to the fact that texts are not free standing, but they refer to other texts for the analysis (Atkinson & Coffey, 2011). This research has actively made use of the transcriptions to describe the proposition as they are a vital way in which the participants constituted their reality. The documents helped to construct representation of the career pathways, though they may not be treated as a firm evidence of what is reported. However, the interviews are regarded as data in their own right, and have been given due analytic attention.
6.6. Directions for further research

The above limitations and the promising results of the study have opened up new opportunities for exploring this phenomenon and raise additional interesting questions. For example, what about different occupational fields – are there any differences, of what sort? Future research could more rigorously test and enhance our understanding with regard to different professions like lawyers, doctors and engineers where the gendered patterns are found to be persistent.

We might also ask if there is a relationship between personality factors and career crafting activities, and whether stressful life events effect crafting efforts. It would be worthwhile to explore whether career crafting differs by ethnicity, for example, do Māori\(^{22}\) and Pākehā\(^{23}\) differ in how they perceive and craft their careers? It will be worthwhile to focus on younger accounting professionals (age group of 20-29) to understand the influence of external factors and individual agency in career decisions at that life stage. If, as we have argued above, career crafting is a potent theoretical concept, then its contribution to our understanding of career progress and job satisfaction can only be substantial.

Spousal support was identified as one of the key determinants of career development, a study involving both the partners will be useful in discovering the undercurrents of the relationship, and to explore career crafting practices used by both for personal success.

Career crafting has been proved as an explanatory mechanism for career pathways; it will be worthwhile to examine its usefulness as a career planning tool. A longitudinal study might be undertaken to see how different career crafting practices can be used to plan the pathways to achieve desired outcomes.

As stated earlier, the professional body of accountants in New Zealand, NZICA incorporated with its Australian counterpart in November 2013. The new body is called Chartered Accountants Australia and New Zealand. It will be interesting to find out about the impact of this new body on career decisions and pathways of participant accountants and accounting sector in New Zealand, and the role of career crafting in this process.

This research has identified several components of cognitive, relational and task crafting (see Figure 6.1). It will be useful to develop a “career crafting scale” to measure the extent of crafting practices which could help individuals and organisations in developing a better understanding of the concept.

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\(^{22}\) The indigenous population of New Zealand.

\(^{23}\) Maori language term for people of European descent in New Zealand.
6.7. Conclusion

The new paradigm of career crafting has proved to be a powerful tool to understand how accounting professional participants developed their careers in order to achieve personal success. Built on the job crafting principles of cognitive, task and relational crafting, this study has extended these and also included three influences of family, organisation and environment. It also incorporated gender career development patterns, and ascertained broader understanding of success to encompass personal and professional spheres.

The awareness of career crafting practices would benefit employees and employers in understanding their potential, reframing goals and in charting their career pathways, and this information could also be embedded in the process of building better work designs. Organisations can consider these issues while planning human resource policies with regard to facilitating employees achieve a balance in the personal and professional sphere through organisational support and opportunities, training, freedom to design job, flexible policies, and mentoring.

Although career crafting approach has been developed to explain work and careers by studying accounting professionals in New Zealand, it may also be applied to a wider range of audience and other life-space transitions. It is hoped that the paradigm would help to explain how career crafting can be potentially used to plan and manage different events in personal and professional life leading to personal success.
Appendix A Model of job crafting by Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001)

**Motivations**
- Need for control over job and work meaning
- Need for positive self-image
- Need for human connection with others

**Moderating variables**
- Perceived opportunity to job craft
  - Job features
- Individual orientation toward work
- Motivational orientation

**Job Crafting practices**
- Changing task boundaries
  - Alter types of job tasks
  - Alter number of job tasks
- Changing cognitive task boundaries
  - Alter view of job as discrete parts or whole
- Changing relational boundaries
  - Alter with whom one interacts at work
  - Alter nature of interaction at work

**Specific effects**
- Changes the design of the job
- Changes the meaning of the work
- Changes one's work identity

**General effects**
- Changes the social environment at work
## Appendix B

**Main differences between qualitative and quantitative approach**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Qualitative</th>
<th>Quantitative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research approach</td>
<td>Inductive</td>
<td>Deductive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontological view</td>
<td>Multiple realities</td>
<td>Causal relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature of truth</td>
<td>Grounded in the real world</td>
<td>Hypothesis testing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epistemological view</td>
<td>Subjective</td>
<td>Objective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher situatedness</td>
<td>Emic (insider)</td>
<td>Etic (outsider)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research design</td>
<td>Study specific, emergent, unstructured</td>
<td>Structured, systematic, replicable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research focus</td>
<td>Themes</td>
<td>Variables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant selection</td>
<td>Non-random</td>
<td>Random</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Representation of data</td>
<td>Textual</td>
<td>Numeric</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpretation</td>
<td>Thematic analysis</td>
<td>Statistical analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Representation of findings</td>
<td>Narrative, performative</td>
<td>Statistical tables and graphs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflection of the real world</td>
<td>Slice of life</td>
<td>Representative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Jennings, 2010, Tourism Research, p. 130*
**Appendix C Preliminary data sheet**

- **Name:** __________________________

- **Age group:**
  - 20 - 29
  - 30 - 39
  - 40 - 49
  - 50 - 59
  - 60 and over

- **Partnership status with respect to your current relationship:**
  - Single
  - Married
  - Living together
  - Divorced/separated

  If in a partnered relationship, is your partner:
  - Working full time
  - Part time
  - Not in paid work

- **Do you have children? Yes/No**
  - If yes, no. of children: _____
  - Ages: _______________________

- **Other dependents: Yes/No**

- **Highest Educational/professional qualifications attained:** _________________

- **Paid work experience (in years):** Overall _____ In the present job _____

- **Last three positions you have held: (from the latest)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Position title</th>
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- **Have you ever taken a decision to opt out and leave workforce voluntarily? Yes / No**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Further education</th>
<th>Overseas trip</th>
<th>Family responsibilities</th>
<th>Health issues</th>
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Any other reason ____________________________
How close is your present job to your **expected career pathway**?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not at all close</th>
<th>Somewhat close</th>
<th>Close</th>
<th>Very close</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

How satisfied are you in your present job?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not satisfied</th>
<th>Somewhat satisfied</th>
<th>Satisfied</th>
<th>Very satisfied</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

On a ladder of **overall life satisfaction** of 10, where would you place yourself?

Low 1___ 2___ 3___ 4___ 5___ 6___ 7___ 8___ 9___ 10 high
Appendix D  Topic-based interview guide

- Career trajectory and overall life satisfaction
  1. How close is your present job to your concept of career progression?
  2. On a ladder of satisfaction of 10, where do you find yourself?
  3. Balance in personal, family, & career requirements
  4. Having fulfilling life outside work

- Task crafting: activities (routine, developmental, leisure, altering the scope or nature, taking on additional tasks)
  1. Do you experience a balance between personal, family, & career activities?
  2. Opportunity to design the job your way to make it more fulfilling
  3. Do you wish you could get more involved in the career to achieve your goals?
  4. Are you able to manage the demands on your time with resources available?
  5. Pursuing hobbies and recreational activities

- Relational crafting: important others, altering the nature and extent of relationships, creating additional relationships
  1. What roles do important others play in your life decisions and satisfaction?
  2. Having a sense of belonging at workplace
  3. Relationship with your superiors, colleagues, and subordinates
  4. Quality of connections with people who matter and its impact on career trajectory

- Cognitive crafting: prioritizing, meaning making, redefining tasks and/or relationships, reframing perception of job
  1. Having clear career goals
  2. Having a good sense of what makes your life meaningful
  3. Having role clarity in life in order to play different roles effectively
  4. Awareness of skills & knowledge gaps at work, and addressing them
  5. Experiencing a sense of achievement at work

- Constraints and contributions
  1. What have been the limiting and contributing factors in your career progression?
  2. To what extent fortuity has played a role in your life?
  3. How do you learn to cope with career demands and achieve desirable outcomes?
Appendix E Research information sheet

Lincoln University

Faculty of Commerce

Research Information Sheet

**Exploratory study of professional careers in New Zealand**

I am undertaking doctoral research at Lincoln University and my area of study is professional careers in New Zealand. Understanding career pathways and the factors influencing career decisions may help people plan their careers in the future, and achieve career goals.

Your participation in this project is voluntary, and the interview would be conducted at a mutually convenient time and place. The interview could last for at least one hour. There is no need to answer every question. Ideally the interview needs to be tape-recorded for better information collection. Once the interview transcript is ready, it will be shown to you for your approval. You would retain the right to withdraw from the research till up to 14 days of receiving the transcript. If you have any concerns about the research and your participation, I would be pleased to discuss them with you.

The results of the project may be published, but you may be assured of your anonymity and confidentiality of the information in this investigation. Your identity will not be made public, or made known to any person other than me (Dr Mohini Sukhapure), my supervisors (Dr Rick Fraser and Dr Greg Clydesdale) and the Human Ethics Committee, without your express consent.

Your wish to contribute to the research is valued and respected. If you would like to receive the summary, please email me indicating your interest. I would be pleased to share the summary of results with you once it is prepared.

The project is being carried out by:

**Name of principal researcher: Dr Mohini Sukhapure**

**Contact details**  Mohini.Sukhapure@lincolnuni.ac.nz, Phone no. 03 325 2811  
Faculty of Commerce, Lincoln University, 7647, Christchurch, New Zealand

**Name of Supervisor: Dr Rick Fraser**

**Contact Details:** Rick.Fraser@lincoln.ac.nz

The project has been reviewed and approved by the Lincoln University Human Ethics Committee. The Human Ethics Committee has seen an indicative schedule of the interview.
Appendix F Consent form

Consent Form

Name of Project: Exploratory study of professional careers in New Zealand

I have read the research information sheet and understood the description of the above-named project. On this basis I agree to participate as a respondent in the project, and I consent to publication of the results of the project with the understanding that anonymity will be preserved. I understand that notes may be taken during the interview.

I understand that the transcript of the interview will be shown to me for an approval, and I am aware that I can withdraw from the research till up to 14 days of receiving the interview transcript.

I agree to have the interview tape-recorded.  Yes  No

I agree to note-taking.  Yes  No

Name: 

Signed:  Date: 

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Appendix G Nodal structure

1. Activities
   - Community work (E)
   - Personal – hobbies, interest (P)

2. Career clarity – initial (E)

3. Career clarity – later (E)

4. Career goals – these were classified as
   - Future goals (E)
   - Initial goal (P)
   - Navigational change (E)
   - No navigational change (E)
   - Subsequent goals (P)

   Each of the above goals was further branched out into the following influencing factors:
   - Family (P)
   - Organization (P) & (E – with regard to school/university for initial goal)
   - Other factors (P)
   - Self (P)

5. Career progression: two types of factors were considered which influenced career growth positively or negatively.

   - Conducive factors – positive (P)
     - Family (E)
     - Organization: freedom to design the job, organizational factors, superiors, time flexibility, training, work associates (E)
     - Other factors (E)
     - Self (E)

   - Limiting factors – negative (P)
     - Family (E)
     - Organization: management, organizational factors, work associates (E)
     - Other factors (E)
     - Self (E)
6. Crafting (P)
   - Cognitive (P)
   - Relational (P)
   - Task (P)

7. Important others (P)
   - Family (P)
   - Others (P)

8. Mentors (P)
   - Lack of mentoring (E)
   - Mentoring (P)

9. Self-concept (E)

10. Serendipity (E)

11. Work relationships (P)
    - Formal (P)
    - Informal (E)

12. Work-life balance (P)
Appendix H Triangulation document

Following are the responses of some of the participants in the study of ‘Career Progression of accounting professionals’. You are requested to rate the following statements according to the following rating scale:

-1 Negative, 0 Nil, 1 Low, 2 Medium, and 3 high

The aim is to identify the influencing factors in the choice of the accounting career. These factors have been categorised as

- Self (self-concept, awareness, abilities)
- Family (background, support in career guidance)
- School (choice of subjects, teachers, career counselling support)

More than one option may apply to a statement. Please leave it blank if you think none of the options apply.

“I studied accounting at school, so I had a pretty strong numbers and rational analytical stream of study at school, and an incredible teacher. This particular individual influenced me and a lot of my friends to follow business.”

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<tr>
<th>Family</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Self</th>
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“My parents... there was always a lot of tension at home and ultimately my parents separated, and divorced. I really wanted to get out, and the only way to really do that was to start work”

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<th>School</th>
<th>Self</th>
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“So my mum just stepped in and said, this is what she wants, you (school) let her. She is not going to do science; she is going to do what she wants (accounting). That was really good to have that support.”

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<th>Family support</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Self</th>
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“If I had a tertiary qualification and went into a profession that was well respected and had been around for centuries, that would always provide a good platform for career branching wherever I wanted to go, that would be sensible.”

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<th>School</th>
<th>Self</th>
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“Not my parents particularly, they just being that older generation, they didn’t particularly encourage me, so it was quite self-directed.”

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<th>Family</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Self</th>
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</table>
“No, accounting wasn’t offered at my school at that time.”

“I just always liked numbers, and then I took accounting in third or fourth form, so I was always doing accounting from then.”

“Probably I had an influential accounting teacher, just really good, and someone that you looked up to when you are quite little.”

“I didn’t really think that I was the type of person to go to university, probably didn’t think I was intelligent enough to go.”

“My father said you should be an accountant. We had a farm so I used to go along with my parents to their meetings with their accountant. Those meetings that I always went to with my parents were always about tax, and looking at their financial statements. So mum and dad used to sit down and explain things in the financial statements to me, so that’s why I took an interest.”

“My mum brought me up saying girls can do anything.”

“I was heavily influenced by my grandparents and my parents, both were incredibly hard working, my grandfather particularly with his brain, and my mum and dad more so with their brawn.”

“I think I fell into accounting in about fifth form, I enjoyed the maths, it was a strong subject and did economics, which led to accounting in the sixth form, really enjoyed that, so from there I pursued accounting as the option.”
“My mum was a book keeper so if she brought work home, I would see her doing reconciliations, doing the family budget, and things like that.”

“It’d have been the careers guy at school I think he had this information about the part time studies or the allowance for part time studies and the pay of the fees.”

“Dad’s quite a bit of a sounding board, he held a reasonably high managerial position in an organization.”

“A local firm there approached the school wanting people to come in, so I got a job through that, in just a small local CA firm.”

“My father was an architect and he definitely looked down on accountants.”

“I had a very good job with my dad up at the bakery, so that’s where I managed to save, my biggest savings. It was a good paying job, hard physical work, but gave me an eye opener as well, didn’t want to do that for the rest of my life.”

“I used to talk to my parents a lot, and my father is a dairy farmer and my mother was a clerical medical typist, so they didn’t work from legal or accounting backgrounds, but they always said- keep your options open, don’t sell yourself short, so they were always encouraging.”

“It was the career advisors at school who sort of said- these are the careers, if you do these subjects, this is where it could lead.”
(Rating scale: -1 Negative, 0 Nil, 1 Low, 2 Medium, and 3 high)

“The family business, it was such a big weight, there was this big expectation that I was going to do it, and I was kind of very narrow in my thinking in terms of what else I am going to do? I was here studying, so this was an immediate opportunity which provided me a way out.”

In the final year at high school we had a career advisor. I don’t recall them being particularly helpful, all I recall is being given pamphlets.”

Retrospectively I think, what I was thinking, there were so many other things I could have done, and different paths I could have taken, but my thinking was so narrowed, because both of my older brothers hadn’t gone into the business, my dad expected me to go into the business.”

The inspiration probably came from a teacher at the high school, he created a very competitive environment in the classroom, an environment that I sort of thrived on I think.”

And then a couple of opportunities came up through the school, where jobs were being offered for accountants, and I had done reasonably well in my accounting studies.”

I first wanted to be an engineer when I was studying, but then I didn’t enjoy maths that much, and then thought of chartered accounting. You don’t have to that high level of Maths like Engineers have... very light maths.”

I’m surprised that when I look back now that the school counsellor had never suggested it as a career, given my interest and my abilities.”
(Rating scale: -1 Negative, 0 Nil, 1 Low, 2 Medium, and 3 high)

“I was brought up in an academic sort of environment, but I chose professional accounting as my career.”

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family support</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Self</th>
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“If I had a tertiary qualification and went into a profession that was well respected and had been around for centuries, that would always provide a good platform for career branching wherever I wanted to go, that would be sensible.”

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family support</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Self</th>
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```
And now some statements related to the level of career clarity, the aim is to identify how clear the participants were about their initial career goal.

Please rate them as: 0- No career clarity, 1- somewhat clear, 2- clear, and 3- crystal clear

“I went to the varsity, again I am not sure why I picked up the BCom, and again when I started work I wasn’t really sure, what my plans were...sort of fell into the career”

“All I wanted to do was fly planes; it’s all I wanted to do since I was about five.”

“I kind of stumbled into it rather than thinking it through and thinking this is actually what I want to do for the rest of my life. It was more that I just went with the flow.”

“I decided to become a chartered accountant when I was in the fourth form at school.”

“So that was partly the reason I ended up doing three degrees, really because I wasn’t exactly sure what I wanted to do, so I was leaving my options open in terms of what I wanted to do.”

“I didn’t really know what I wanted to do to be honest.”

“I had always planned to go to university and do accounting.”

“I more drifted into it rather than making a conscious decision.”

“I had wanted to be an accountant since I was maybe ten or so, I had decided it right back then.”

Thank you! Your contribution in the study is much appreciated.
### Appendix | Demographic factors

#### 1.1 Age group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>30-39</th>
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#### 1.2 Marital status and Gender

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#### 1.3 Parental status and gender

Out of the 34 married/separated participants, four participants (two male and two female) do not have children. The female participants are in the age group 30-39 and they choose not to have children now, as they want to focus on their career.

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*One female and one male participant are single.

#### 1.4 Spousal work status

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*One female and one male participant are single.
Appendix J  **Profession related factors**

### J.1  Region and sector wise break-up

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<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
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<td>Wellington</td>
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<td>Christchurch</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>Dunedin</td>
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### J.2  Position held in the organization

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<td>Male</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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Appendix K Career lattice

K.1 Pathways of academics (for explanation see Section 4.2.1)

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<th>Academia</th>
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</tr>
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<td></td>
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<td>4 Associate Professor</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3 Senior Lecturer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0 Tutor</td>
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<td>Career Phase</td>
<td>Start</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>Start</td>
<td>Middle</td>
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[Diagram of career pathways with nodes and arrows representing transitions between different sectors, firms, and academia.]
### K.2 Pathways of participants working in accounting firms

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**Career Phase**

- **Start**
- **Middle**
- **Current**

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<th>Start</th>
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</table>

**Diagram**

- **F_{11}**
- **M_{10}**
- **F_{6-11}, M_{4-5}**
- **M_{3}**
- **F_{10}**
- **F_{4-5}, M_{2}**
- **M_{8-9}**
- **F_{1-3}, M_{1}**
- **M_{9-7}, F_{9}**
- **F_{8}**

**Positions and Roles**

- **Owner**
- **5 Partner**
- **4 Executive Director**
- **3 Senior Manager**
- **2 Manager**
- **1 Accountant**
- **0 Intern**
Appendix L Career crafting and gender

L.1  Gender and cognitive crafting

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L.2  Gender and relational crafting

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<tr>
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L.3  Gender and task crafting

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L.4  Gender and career crafting

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Appendix M Career crafting and demographic factors

### M.1 Age and career crafting

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### M.2 Marital status and career crafting

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<td>Divorced/separated</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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### M.3 Parental status and career crafting

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Appendix N **Career crafting and career clarity**

### N.1 Factors influencing initial career clarity

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### N.2 Factors influencing current career clarity

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Appendix O  Career crafting and personal success

### 0.1 Career crafting and job satisfaction

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### 0.2 Career crafting and life satisfaction

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* One participant did not wish to rate this

### 0.3 Career crafting and personal success

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